

NEIGHBORS IN BARRON SPRINGS

BY ALICE EDDY CURTIS



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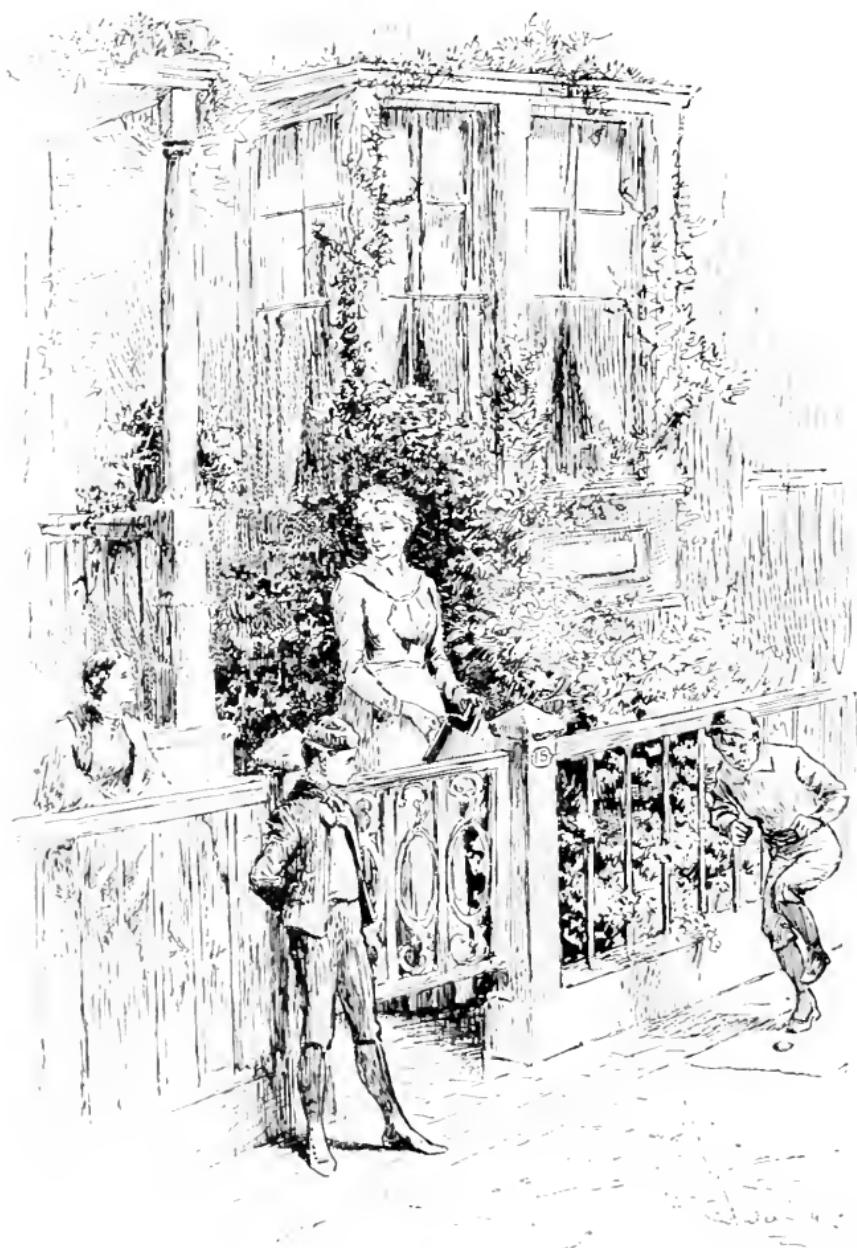
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NEIGHBORS IN BARTON SQUARE

BY

ALICE EDDY CURTIS

AUTHOR OF "THE SILVER CROSS," "MISS MARIGOLD'S TITHES," ETC.

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NEIGHBORS IN BARTON SQUARE.

CHAPTER I.

THE NEW HOME.

IT is n't very big; but then we would n't want a big house, you know," said Jane, knitting busily, with her work very near her eyes. It was growing dark, and yet one hardly felt justified in lighting the gas yet. "And such a pleasant neighborhood, Maddy dear! Why, there 's a little place next door with the bit of ground in front all railed off and filled full of flowers; that 'll be a real comfort to Aunt Bab and me. And then the little square, you know, with the trees and all. You 'd like that, Maddy, would n't you? There 's seats; and you could take a book of a summer evening, though there seemed to be a good many children round, come to think of it. But there 's a little bit of a fountain, you know, with a ball that tosses up in the water and makes it quite pretty, even if the grass is worn off here and there. Why, I just

stood and watched it for five minutes! And such a very respectable neighborhood!"

Maddy shrugged her shoulders with a little impatient frown. She was standing beside the window with her head against the pane, a little in Jane's light if she had noticed it. Such a pretty, graceful figure in its trim black gown! Maddy always looked trim and dainty, even in the cheapest of fabrics. Jane said it was because she was so easy to fit.

"I 'd rather fit Maddy than any one I ever saw," she said with some pride: "she 's so straight and slim, and yet there is n't an angle in her. Oh, Maddy 's got the best shoulders I ever did get hold of, which is lucky, seeing she 's in the family and her work has to be done between times."

Jane herself looked anything but dainty just then. She had sat at the sewing-machine all day, and the weather was warm, and her collar had become limp. There were pins sticking in the front of her gown, and a lock of her thin brown hair had straggled away from confinement and hung down forlornly. Maddy noticed it as she glanced over her shoulder, but she did not consider it worth while to speak of it. What a dull color Jane's

hair was, and how it slipped away from hairpins ! Maddy, whose waving locks were of the brightest chestnut, put up one fair hand to the shapely coil at the back of her own head to make certain that it was all secure.

“Don’t you think it would be nice, dear ? ” said Jane a little anxiously. “Of course four rooms is n’t very much, but we could get along I ’m sure. I ’ve figured it all out, and I ’m sure we could make it do. And such a nice, quiet place ! I don’t believe we could get a bigger house, or even four rooms so cheap in any pleasant place ; and the houses opposite look as if we could get work — I mean I could.”

“Oh, I don’t care where we go or what we do ! ” cried Maddy impatiently. “Don’t go all over it again, Jane, for pity’s sake ! Did n’t we talk it threadbare last night when you came home ? Of course we ’ll take it. We can’t stay here, and I suppose Aunt Bab will be better off. If only it is n’t as smoky as this I sha’n’t say anything. There ’s sure to be something horrid everywhere.”

Jane sighed. She wanted to talk it over again, very much. Maddy had only been at home from the office a little while, and Jane had counted all

the afternoon on having a long chat over the family prospects. She had been turning them over and over in her mind as she stitched busily on the purple gown which she was making for Mrs. Winthrop's Scotch servant. It was "sleazy" stuff, and had to be watched carefully to keep it from fraying. Jane was almost nervous before it became too dark to run the machine. She had pushed the kitten out of her way with something like a shove, as she rose and took her knitting to sit by the window. The change of work was a relief; but Jane was conscious of an absurd desire to bundle all signs of dressmaking out of the way, and—even to cry a little, after it was too dark for Aunt Bab to see. But that was all foolishness.

"As if I had n't found out long ago that it pays to make the most of this dusk time," she had said briskly to herself, straightening up and looking very hard out of the window. "And as if we did n't want every cent we can raise just now when we 're going to move. Jane Dunbar, don't be a goose! Besides, my back has ached harder than this many a time when I did n't so much as think of stopping work. And Maddy 'll be here soon, and then we 'll just talk it over. If we can

make the child a real pretty room she 'll just be set up."

And then the girl had come in, just as her sister was growing anxious about the lateness of the hour, and Jane flushed and brightened into positive animation as she launched into the subject of the new home. And now—Maddy had said that she did not care what became of them!

Jane sighed a rather trembling sigh, and her fingers flew faster than ever. A little young moon hung like a horn of gold in the soft sky beyond the listless, beautiful head at the window. There were streaks of pale amber below it. The sunset must have been beautiful for those who had time to watch it. Inside, the dull room was full of shadows. One could just gather an impression of litter and confusion about the sewing-machine, and a heap of unfinished work lay folded on a chair close by. There were fashion-books on the table, and one or two illustrated gift-books lay among them,—books bound in embossed morocco, with much gilding. Pictures of "valor and beauty" were to be found between their covers; pictures which Jane and Maddy had gazed upon with awe in turn as children, lingering with admiration over

the large-eyed young ladies with flowing ringlets and moss rosebuds in their hands, and dwelling with especial admiration on the fascinating brigand who carried one of these lovely damsels across his arm as if she had been a doll.

There was a haircloth sofa against the farther wall, and a knitted tidy hung across its back. Jane thought it best to leave it there as an advertisement, though it was almost too nice for every day, as she often said. Now and then people coming after work noticed it and ordered one like it. Sometimes, too, they noticed little soft, white woolen articles which lay under a shade on a small stand near the door; though the fruit of Jane's twilight hour was usually sent to some store in the city. Such dainty, fleecy things! Little socks of creamy white and soft blue; delicate shirts of more than one dainty pattern; and a veil, like frostwork grown warm, and mittens and leggings fit for the king of fairyland. There was soft woolen edging as well, and a heap of white and pink that looked like a bit of a summer sunrise, but was only a blanket ready to be thrown about some bonny baby form that would be all the sweeter for its pretty wrapping. In fact,

as Maddy had remarked once, that corner of the room was pretty, and it was the only spot in the place that was. Jane often looked over and smiled at this stand, as she sat at her machine. It was pleasant to think that her own hard-worked fingers had made such pretty things, and she was always glad when she could work on more bits of daintiness like them. It was the only chance she had to make pretty things. With the exception of a few girls like Maddy, Jane's customers were not of the tasteful order: they knew that to look well on small means one must keep to plain gowns, with a preponderance of black quite depressing to the poor little work-woman who liked bright hues as if she had been a child. But likings mattered very little to the head of the Dunbar household. If Jane had seated herself some evening—as she never did—to sit idly for an hour or two, and look back over her thirty years of life, she would have been obliged to confess that her opportunities for choice had been of the most scattered description. What could the elder sister do, in a household such as theirs had always been, but work and “take the care” from the time she was old enough to calcu-

late how far seventeen cents would go in the marketing, and what was the cheapest way of managing the family wash? Jane had been a little housewife always, even before Aunt Bab's mind began to fail so that she was obliged to give up the nominal headship of the domestic forces. Poor Aunt Bab! She had tried her best with the girls: Jane always gave her credit for that, and quietly tried to do her best, now that auntie was past helping. Indeed, what else could she do?

“It was a blessing she was here while I was learning my trade,” said Jane. “What would I have done if I’d had all the care of father and Maddy then! Of course she couldn’t do much, ever; but she always tried to do her best, and that’s all one can ask.”

“Father” had been dead for five years now. Jane thought of him lovingly as he was in the last years of his life,—a thin, bowed, gray-haired man, with wistful eyes and trembling hands; a man who somehow gave one the impression of having lost his way. He had been out of work a good deal in those last years, but the family had always managed to get along. Sometimes they had only just managed; but as Jane said, “That

was the time when it was a comfort to think that a miss was as good as a mile."

It had tired father to think about money at last, though he often told Jane long stories of the days when he could run up a column of figures quicker than anybody in the store, and when he had succeeded in straightening out one troublesome account so satisfactorily that the head book-keeper had said, "You 'll be rich man yet, if you go on this way, Dunbar."

The prophecy had never been fulfilled, somehow, but the old man liked to remember that little triumph, after thirty years.

Now and then he shook his head sadly when he came to the end of the story, and said, "I wish it had been true, for your sake and Maddy's, Jane." And the elder daughter always laughed a little, and answered, "Oh, well, we 've got all we need, and you must n't mind not being rich, father. I don't believe I 'd care to be real rich. I should n't know what to do with it all. Besides, you never had a real chance."

It was a grave, quiet household in those days ; the worn-out, troubled man, the feeble-minded aunt, with her white hair and whiter face, a long,

solemn figure, appearing at every turn of the family path, and the little, eager-faced, anxious dressmaker, with her busy fingers and busier mind, always turning over the problem of how to secure the daily bread without disturbing father, or letting Maddy feel too much of the burden.

For Maddy was so much younger. Jane thought of her with tears in her eyes sometimes ; the pretty little sister whom she had cared for ever since their mother died and left her on life's threshold, with only one pair of brave childish hands to keep the bitter winds of life away from the newcomer. Jane would have liked to be rich for Maddy's sake. Maddy was different from the rest of them. She had her mother's eyes — the beautiful, shining eyes that Jane could remember smiling at her plain little daughter in the old times, though mother's eyes were somehow softer than Maddy's.

“If Maddy can only be like her,” the elder sister thought, through all the little one's childhood. “If she can only grow up as bright and sweet and happy. Why, mother always stayed happy, even though they must have had pretty near as hard times then as we do now. I

remember when I used to want to have a birthday party so, she 'd laugh and say, 'Never you mind, little daughter; when our ship comes in we 'll have birthdays every day of the week, and parties twice a day if you like.' And then I used to laugh too. I wish I could be like that. It would do father so much good, and the house would be so much livelier for Maddy ; but somehow, I can't seem to. I—I wish mother 'd lived long enough for me to get to be more like her."

It was with a dim consciousness that the joy and beauty which might have been a part of her own girlhood had been carried down in the tide of cares that rose around her while she was still a child, that Jane set herself to keep her sister at school, and to spare her the knowledge of the daily struggle which must be gone through over and over again, it seemed, as long as life lasted. That knowledge would come soon enough, as it did come when the child grew old enough to long for pretty things, like other girls, and to feel shut out from the good times that went on in the high school, because she could not ask her classmates home as the rest did. One or two came once, and Jane welcomed them with delight, and made

them stay to tea, and even spent twenty-five cents for peaches and sponge-cakes for the occasion; but the rooms were so shabby and bare, and little Jane herself was so eager and fluttered, with her anxious, trembling smile, and father sat so silent and sad at the head of the table, and Aunt Bab quoted Scripture so alarmingly, and the peaches hardly went around! It was "queer"—Maddy felt that; and she burst into passionate tears after her friends had gone, hiding her head in Jane's lap, and sobbing wildly that she would never ask anybody to come and see her again. And father came over and patted her bright head, and asked Jane if she could n't have managed differently, somehow; and Aunt Bab lifted up her voice from the chimney corner—Aunt Bab *would* sit there, even in summer—and remarked seriously, "Man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward, and we spend our years as a tale that is told."

And nobody ever knew that long afterwards a little rusty spot on Jane's sewing-machine marked where her own hot tears had fallen as she sat stitching that night after the rest were in bed, finishing the work that had been laid aside to make joyful preparations for "Maddy's company."

After that time nobody ever came to see Maddy. Jane had a half-defined consciousness that her sister had let it be understood that she did not wish visitors, but she never said so.

And then had come the time when the old clerk laid his tired head on his pillow for the last time and passed gently away to the other world, whispering, "It 's all straightened out now, sir, and if I can have a day off, I 'll take a holiday with my wife."

Jane had wept and smiled together over his sleeping form that night. Poor father!

"He never had any chance," she whispered; "but now he can rest, and he 's with mother. Poor, dear father!"

She was thankful that Maddy's new gown and her old one were of black, so that a bit of crape here and there could turn them into mourning. She was thankful, too, that Aunt Bab, who insisted on wearing gay-colored gowns which she had kept since she was a girl, had a cough and could not go out that winter. The two sisters went gravely to church together on the Sunday after their father's death, and sat in their seat by the door; one of them, at least, looking rather wistfully at the people

as they passed in. Jane would have liked a little human sympathy; but very few in the church knew the Dunbar family, and many wondered whom the minister meant when he prayed for those in trouble. It was almost a pity that they should have joined such a large and fashionable church because father liked the preacher. Nobody ever noticed them. Maddy had given up Sunday-school long ago, because the girls in her class wore such pretty frocks; and she held herself resolutely aloof from the faint efforts of a few young people to make friends with her. "They 'd never ask me to their houses, and I sha'n't go to their prayer-meetings," she said with a toss of her pretty head. "I don't care to be done good to. Why don't they ask you, Jane? You 're good, I 'm sure, and you like prayer-meetings."

"If I ever had a chance to go to them," said Jane with a sigh. "Very likely they know I could n't go. Well, I 'm sorry you don't like them, dear, but I don't know what to do about it. I wish you were a member, Maddy. Things would seem different to you then." At which Maddy laughed outright and ran out of the room; and Jane, flushing painfully, withdrew into her-

self, and wished that she dared talk to her sister about such things and knew just how to begin. Maddy was strange since she grew too old to be told Bible stories and taught little hymns. Jane was afraid, sometimes, that it was because they were poor, but she was never quite sure. Poor little Maddy! If mother had only lived to help her through this hard time!

“I suppose it would have been just as hard for me, if I’d ever had a chance to feel it,” thought the patient elder sister.

The endless round of toil and contriving had gone on as usual since the father’s death, a little lighter now that Maddy had left the high school and found a place to do writing in a lawyer’s office. It was a quiet place, with a grim-faced, silent man, who was the safest possible guardian for a pretty young girl, the elder sister had decided; going to see him with fluttering anxiety over the sending of her ewe lamb into the world. Maddy had insisted on going to work. She could never bear to settle down at home, she said, and besides, times were hard, and if she could support herself so much the better. She wanted things for herself that she could not have otherwise, and

Jane had worked for her long enough. She had gone to the principal of the high school and asked him to find her a place before Jane knew anything of her plans, and had burst out laughing when her sister insisted on seeing Mr. Kean before allowing the work to begin.

“As if I could n’t take care of myself!” she had cried. “Jane Dunbar, you’re such a goose!”

That was a year ago, and the work had gone on ever since. Jane said to herself that it was better for the child, she was happier since she was busy; yes, Jane thought she was happier. Only, she wished that Maddy could feel like telling more of her thoughts and experiences, as she herself would have liked to do on her own account, now that they two were both “grown up.” Jane thought that it would be very pleasant to tell Maddy everything, and to receive frank, girlish confidences from her in return; but the girl seemed to grow more reserved as time went on.

“I suppose I’m so much older, and then I’m fussy and bothersome,” Jane sighed. “Well, she’s a dear child, anyhow, and I’m silly to want her different. Maddy’s just herself, and there is n’t a prettier girl in the city, or a brighter.

Why, when she reads out loud to Aunt Bab and me, it 's easier than reading to one's self; and if she does n't know poetry by heart! It 's something to be real thankful for that Maddy got through the high school. That 's one thing I had my own way about right through, and I ought to be real thankful. Maddy 's just Maddy, and I don't know as I 'd want her any different."

The elder sister had long since given up talking of hopes that Maddy might grow up "just like mother." It was a comfortable fact for Jane Dunbar that she generally settled herself down to the existing state of things as the very best possible under the circumstances.

" Maybe it would have just made me sad thinking about it, if she 'd really grown up like her," she said to herself. " I believe I 'd rather have mother to think about just as she is; the only one in the world. And I 'm almost glad, if I had to lose her, that it was when I was younger; for now I can always think about her treating me like a child, petting me and laughing at me in that loving kind of a way that nobody else ever could have to me. It 's so nice to have all that to remember; and Maddy 'll be just as nice in her way when she 's settled down and comes to take life easy."

No, Jane Dunbar could not be said to have chosen her own life. She had lived the life that was given her, that was all; but as she never thought of it as a dreary one, perhaps it was just as well. But now a real opportunity for choice had come, and it was no wonder, perhaps, that Maddy was a little tired of discussing the question of removal. Jane had been in a fever of excitement ever since the matter had come up, and had made so many flying excursions to look at dwellings in different parts of the city, that Aunt Bab had said more than once, in her most aggrieved way,—being lonely if left behind, and reproachful if taken along,—“Jane Dunbar, you ’re a pampering the flesh, and you ’ll find out before long that the way of transgressors is hard. Besides, David said in his wrath, All men are liars, and you ’d better begin to prepare for your latter end.”

It had been like an especial inspiration when the thought came that it was possible to take a house in one of the suburbs, where the air would be better for Aunt Bab, and where, perhaps, a whole house might be found, instead of the one floor which was the family residence at present. Jane

had flown out to examine the house advertised in the newspaper, and had come back with eyes beaming and face as happy as a child's. Even Maddy had been interested at first. It would really be a pleasant change to take the half-hour's ride in the cars morning and night, and the four-roomed cottage seemed almost an attraction by contrast with their present gloomy quarters, where factory smoke and "boarders" down-stairs combined to make the house cheerless.

But as Maddy had said, "One could n't talk house all day and all night;" and this evening the girl turned wearily away from her sister to gaze with wide, shining eyes at the fair young moon, as if strange thoughts were sailing for her in its silver skiff. And Jane settled back in her chair, and remarked that it was growing dark early now-adays, and that she hoped the lamp would n't smoke to-night, for she must finish that purple dress by bedtime, surely.

"I must get all my work out of the way as soon as possible, if we move next month," she said, and then caught herself up, with a deprecating look at her sister.

"There! there!" she went on, "of course you

don't want to be bothered, dear. You're tired, I can see that. Did you have a hard time at the office to-day?"

"No harder than usual," said Maddy briefly. She drew a chair to the window and sat down, resting her elbow on the sill and her chin on her hand. The pale amber streaks were fading away now. The lamps were beginning to twinkle along the sidewalk. Maddy always liked to watch the street at this time. She smiled a little to herself as one star after another shone quietly out in the dim blue heavens.

" 'Star light, star bright,
First star I see to-night,' "

she whispered, but there Jane broke in again.

"What made you so late, Maddy dear?" she said. "Did Mr. Kean keep you all this time?"

Maddy shrugged her shoulders. "No, he did n't," she replied rather dryly; "I've been to walk. Do you suppose I can stay in that office all day, and in this — this *place* all night, and not get a breath of air between times?"

"Oh, no, dear, of course not!" cried little Jane eagerly. "Why, Maddy, you know I often say you ought to get out more. I'd have come up the

street to meet you and gone, too, if I could have left that purple dress. I don't see why she *would* get purple with that dreadfully red face, but that has n't got anything to do with it. I 'm real glad you went, only you want to be careful about being out too late, all alone."

Maddy smiled slightly once more. She turned about and looked at her sister with a little flitting blush. "*Am I* pretty, Jane?" she said softly.

"Prettier than any girl I know of," responded the elder sister promptly. Jane had never been noted for sound judgment. "It 's something to be real thankful for, Maddy, seems to me, to be able to make people happy just to look at you. It 's a gift of God, dear, only you want to be careful in a big city, you know. It 's so easy to get talked about."

"Well, I suppose that 's true," said Maddy with another little blush. "And I suppose I am pretty, Janey. People need n't pretend they don't know how they look. But you need n't be frightened about me. I—I—had some one with me."

"Some one with you!" repeated Jane doubtfully. "Whom do you mean, dear? Was it—a—girl?"

“Well, no, it was n’t,” said Maddy, laughing. “If you had n’t been so full of your old house, I’d have told you before. He walked down to the river with me, and it was lovely. And he came up to the street, and then I said not to come clear home. I did n’t exactly want him to see this place; besides, I could n’t ask him in, you know. He lent me a book of poetry, ‘Songs of the Old Dramatists.’ I ’ll read you some of it to-night if you want me to. He knows ever so much. There ’s one song that he says is like”—

“But who is ‘he’?” interrupted Jane anxiously. “You did n’t go walking with a stranger, Maddy. You would n’t do that, childie! Oh, you must be careful!”

Maddy laughed scornfully. “What a little old maid you are, Jane,” she said. “Why, he ’s only a lawyer. I saw him in Mr. Kean’s office. He and Mr. Kean do things together sometimes. He just happened to come out when I did, and he said I looked tired and he ’d walk down to the river with me, if I liked. And I did like. It was very kind of him, and I ’m sure if he takes an interest in my reading it ’s very good of him. You ’re always talking about improving myself.”

“Oh, yes, yes!” said Jane apologetically. “I did n’t understand. Of course one of Mr. Kean’s friends—and it was very kind to lend you the book. An old gentleman did you say? Perhaps he has girls of his own, and that’s how he came to notice you. What is his name? I wonder if I saw him that day I was there.”

Maddy laughed heartily, for some occult reason. “No, you never saw him,” she said. “And his name is Mr. Carling, and he is n’t—exactly—old, and I don’t believe he has any daughters, but it’s all right. He’s just as much interested as if he had. O Janey, Janey Dunbar, what a careful old goosey you are! Here, I’m going to light the lamp and look at that book. There was one song he spoke of, that begins, ‘Beauty, clear and fair.’ Shall I read out loud, Jane?”

But Jane shook her head, and hurried away to help Aunt Bab with the tea, and afterward there was the stitching to be taken up again, and the old lady to be helped to bed. Maddy took her book to her own room, and Jane sat solitary and busy until her work was done. Then she took her lamp in her hand and stole softly to her sister’s bedside. How pretty Maddy was when she was

asleep! The book lay on the table beside her, as if she had been reading it after she lay down. Her face was flushed, and she was smiling softly. One long braid of shining hair was thrown across the pillow, and Jane bent down and kissed it gently, so as not to waken the girl.

“Dear little Maddy!” she thought, “I wish she did n’t have anything to do but read poetry books all day long. She looks real happy to-night. Well, I’m glad — but I wish mother had lived to help me take care of her.”

And then she knelt down a moment by the bed, and murmured a little prayer before she went back to where Aunt Bab lay watching for her, with solemn gray eyes that “were enough to scare one into fits,” as Maddy had declared over and over. It was unfortunate for Jane that Aunt Bab could not be left alone at night, and that she was apt to lie awake until the small hours.

CHAPTER II.

BARTON SQUARE.

THREE 'S folks and folks in this world," as Aunt Bab was wont to say, looking solemnly out of the front window at the passers in the street.

One could hardly have found a greater contrast to little Jane Dunbar's household than the family next door to that four-roomed cottage opposite the little fountain with the ball tossing and tumbling in its midst. It was an odd little house, that had once been square and regular like others in the row, but had broken out into individuality, with a bay window at one corner, a wider porch than ordinary, and an environment of flowers that was almost funny in its suggestiveness. How the people who planted them must have planned! The house came out to the street, with only a narrow strip of ground between window and steps, but even this was fenced off and filled with zinnias, marigolds, and chrysanthemums, all ablaze just now with a glory of red and yellow and purple.

Children were apt to stop and look longingly at the bright little tangle as they passed, and if they gazed more than a moment, a voice was apt to call out from behind the muslin curtains just above, “You can take a handful if you want to, but don’t forget to leave some for the next one that wants any.” Whereupon the child generally stared dumbly, and then snatched at the brightest stalks within reach, as if it were afraid to stay long enough for the owner to change her mind. All along the edge of the porch, and on the tin roof above it, were arranged pots and boxes filled with geraniums, pinks, and other thrifty “potters”; and for every plant of the commoner sort there were at least two of monthly roses. The roses of No. 15 were a wonder to the whole street, and every one who passed through the square cast at least a glance upward and about at the beautiful company.

In winter the place seemed even more lovely, for then the bay window was one mass of green, with bits of delicate color showing all through the tender leafage. Creamy white, buff, pink, and scarlet, they hung and leaned and swayed from their slender stalks, “like young maids peepin’,”

a very dream of summer in the midst of snowy streets and biting winds. Nobody knew the secret of their constant growth. Miss Wyman, from the great house across the square, declared that Mrs. North charmed them into being; but Mrs. North only smiled quietly, and smoothed her white neckerchief when she said so.

“They are just the kind of flower for you to like,” Miss Wyman said; “delicate and slender and dainty; and that soft ‘tea’ fragrance. Yes, it’s your flower, Mrs. North. Now, nobody on earth could find a flower for me. Even poor cousin Dick never goes farther than to say that I have ‘dove’s eyes.’” And Miss Wyman sat down on the step where she had been standing while her friend watered the roses, and laughed heartily, throwing back her head with a gesture that would have been comical in any one else.

Mrs. North stood still in the midst of her watering with a deep, tender look growing in her own. “They *are* dove’s eyes, my dear,” she said gently. “Your cousin is quite right.”

Miss Wyman lifted the eyes in question a moment, and then let them fall with a little quick cloud of pain passing over them. “Look out, Mrs.

North," she said, laughing, "you must n't look at me like that. There 's something about you that makes one want to cry when you look so, and you know I 'm not fond of tears."

Poor Miss Wyman! She sat on the steps, a quaint little figure enough, with her bowed shoulders and slightly twisted spine, and her strange attractive face, set in its clustering gray hair; the broad white forehead and brilliant soft eyes impressing one curiously with a sense of abundant life, in pathetic contrast to the feeble deformed body. There was something childlike and almost appealing in Miss Wyman's face. It was no wonder that Mrs. North called her "my dear," as if she were a girl. A sad face it would have been if Miss Wyman had not been so given to laughing. As it was, it was certainly a strange one, that was yet pleasant to look upon. One felt like making its owner talk; and when she did, felt like listening for hours at a time to the clear, musical voice, which ran on in such a stream of laughing chatter. Altogether, Mrs. North's friend was a woman to be remembered after once meeting her.

Mrs. North herself was a graceful, gentle old lady, with soft hair as white as snow, and a digni-

fied, almost stately, bearing, which was belied by the tender sweetness of her beautiful old face. "The pretty old lady" she was called by the children of Barton Square, who were fond of standing in her way as she went to and from market, with her active, elastic step and upright carriage ; or of gathering in an admiring circle to watch the daily watering and clipping that took place on porch and roof of No. 15. If their affection was at all due to the fact that Mrs. North always carried on her arm a black silk bag from which pink winter-green and white peppermint lozenges were apt to make their appearance, who shall find fault? "By their fruits ye shall know them ;" and a heart that overflowed in pink and white sugar-plums for the children of Barton Square was worthy of all love and admiration in the estimation of that small army.

One or two of the band were jumping about on the sidewalk now, in the midst of an exciting game of hop-scotch. Mrs. North had told them that they might draw their figures on her sidewalk. She liked to see them there, she said. Boys might even play marbles under the bay window ; and when Mrs. Green, at the corner house, came out to

rout the company of young athletes who were endeavoring to walk on their hands around the "lamp-post," Mrs. North welcomed the miscreants to her front steps, and even went so far as to take the smallest into her kitchen to apply cold water to the bleeding nose contracted in his flight. Mrs. Green had regarded Mrs. North with disfavor ever since.

"Hop-scotch on her walks is very well," said Mrs. Green, "and the horrid marks all over, and the young ones pretending to rub 'em off, and she a-sending her girl out after they 've gone to finish up, and praising the children for thinking of it. And marbles shot into folks' ankles can't be murmured at, if so be she likes the things to walk over; but when it comes to encouraging these boys to parading round heels up'ards, fit to break their necks and make the whole street look upsy-down, and giving 'em cookies into the bargain, just after *I've* been giving 'em a piece of my mind, I must say it ain't what I feel called upon to approve."

But Mrs. North only smiled placidly and let the children do as they chose.

"They are n't likely to be in much mischief while they 're trying their strength," she said

calmly. "Boys get driven away from every place, and I 'm going to have my front walk one place where they can come if they want to. Besides, I always did like to see them around. Have n't I had four of my own, and would n't I like to have their noise around me again ! "

So the Barton Square boys shouted and shot marbles and turned somersaults at will in front of No. 15 ; and "the pretty old lady" smiled at them from door or window, and thought of her own little lads of long ago. And when Bob Grey's base-ball happened to go crashing through the bay window, knocking over a Sombrella rose in its flight, its owner waited on Mrs. North with an apology as handsome as a boy of twelve could invent ; and the weak-minded woman told him that it was of no consequence, and that accidents would happen, and she thought very likely she could save the plant after all. She said afterward that the boy looked as if he might be going to cry ; and for her part she did n't mind the window a bit, when he was such a gentleman. And three days afterwards a delegation of small urchins walked up the steps of No. 15, and deposited on the door-sill a rose in a new red pot, with the price of the glass neatly wrapped

up in white paper and tied to one of its branches. The neighborhood had gone into the depths of its pockets to make up the amount, and taffy and peanuts were scarce in the vicinity for some days afterwards, though pink and white lozenges were scattered freely in their place. Mrs. North was accustomed to point triumphantly to that particular rosebush as a proof of the wisdom of her treatment of the youth of Barton Square.

“Though I hardly need to speak of these boys,” she would add. “I think my own will show that I have not been mistaken in thinking the best of boys, always.”

How singular it sounded to those who overheard such speeches through the open window,—as one or two children had done on summer evenings,—these words, “my boys.” How was it possible to think of that tall, broad-shouldered Mr. North, the admiration of every urchin on the street, as anybody’s “boy”! Why, he could have picked up any two of the hop-scotch heroes and carried them down the street under his arms, they were sure. He could throw a ball over the highest house in the neighborhood; and when he shook Will Dennis for teasing little Patty Graham, he looked big enough

to annihilate the whole company of boys. Besides, he was a conductor on the railroad, and therefore a public character not to be lightly spoken of. The small boys were fond of watching him off in the morning; passing out of the house at five o'clock with his swinging tread and the never-failing backward look over his shoulder, to where the pretty old lady stood in the doorway. She was always there, summer and winter, sometimes with the early sunshine about her, and sometimes with a soft shawl around her shoulders and a square of yellow gas-light behind. Mr. North always looked back and waved his hat as he opened the gate. Sometimes he called out "Good-by" again, and he always went away whistling as clearly as a blackbird and twirling a rose between his fingers. For Mr. North seemed as fond of roses as his mother, and summer and winter a pink or white bud went with him to his train.

At night the children did not see him often. His train ran until nine o'clock always, and sometimes later, and the majority of his small admirers were in bed by that time, though a few of the older ones could tell of hearing the same swinging tread and the same gay whistling coming through the

dark, and of seeing the door of No. 15 thrown open as the gate clicked, giving a vision of a gentle, fair old face framed in silver hair that seemed quite to light up the darkness before the "mother's boy" went springing up the steps, and the two were lost to view. The children thought that they had good times all by themselves in there. Some of the more imaginative suggested that they had good things to eat, perhaps even pop-corn and candy in winter evenings, and an endless supply of ice-cream in summer, and that they read stories together. Bob Gray had seen them through the window once, when Mr. North was reading aloud. It was a big book that looked as if it were the Arabian Nights, or even Robinson Crusoe; at any rate they were both "as interested as could be."

"And as for singing," continued Bob, who had haunted the window more than the others since the episode of the erratic ball, "as for singing, if anybody can sing jollier songs than he can, I'd like to hear 'em. Sailor songs and such, and even hymns sound sort of lively and nice when he sings 'em; such as, 'Breast the wave, Christian,' and 'We 'll work till Jesus comes.' And if the

pretty old lady don't look nice sitting up there playing on the piano! I climbed up on the window-sill and peeked in to see her. He was singing 'Three jolly sailor boys,' then, and she was laughing. And then I forgot to hold on, and tipped over, so I could n't see any more. I wish I 'd been inside."

The children were perfectly right in supposing that Mr. North and his mother had "good times" together. A happier pair could not have been found anywhere within the bounds of the great city. This very morning Miss Wyman was saying, "It is so comfortable here. Other people that I know have livelier times—I do sometimes myself, with people coming and going; but you and David are just comfortable. I 'd rather be you than anybody I know, Mrs. North; and as for David, he 's to be envied. Just to come home to such a dear little place, with such a woman as you for the queen of it, is enough to make a man as happy as he always looks. Really, it 's a pleasure just to know of people who enjoy themselves as you two do."

Mrs. North smiled indulgently as she picked off a dried leaf. She was accustomed to Miss Wyman's enthusiastic language. "I 've always

had a great deal to make me happy," she said quietly. "Sometimes it seems to me that no woman ever had so much."

"Some people would think that you had had more trouble than most of us," said Miss Wyman. "When one thinks of those you have lost, and how you and David are left alone — but I did n't mean to speak of that, dear Mrs. North. Sometimes you are such a wonder to me, that is all."

The elder woman stood quite still a moment, letting her hands drop idly by her side. A mist seemed to gather in her eyes, but it was more tender than sad.

"I don't mind your speaking of it, my dear," she said. "I have never felt like putting it all out of mind as some people do. I never feel as if they were quite lost ; and the memory of them all is so beautiful that I love to think about them. I can't be thankful enough for what I 've had. Those first ten years when I had my husband, and we were young and working so hard to get our little home, with the boys coming one after another to make us happier than ever. It was such a pretty little home ! That cottage next door makes me think of it sometimes. We were crowded enough, but nothing seemed hard for us. My

David was n't one that minded crowding and noise, any more than I did. Such a gentle, strong, loving heart, my dear, always, and so thoughtful of me! Those years are beautiful, as I said, to look back upon, and I can't be thankful enough for them. And then when he died and I was left behind, why, it was hard, of course, and I 've never got over thinking of him and wanting him, never in all these thirty years; and yet, after the first, it has n't been a bitter kind of grieving. People that love each other can't lose each other, and the other world is n't so very far away, you know; and I had my four boys, and there never were better ones. Every one was ready to help me as soon as he was old enough to do honest work, and they seemed to be every one like David in wanting to take care of me and make me happy, as they always did, bless them! And Walter was so bright at his books; and Harry had a head for figures that was really remarkable, they said; and Paul was so loving and warm-hearted that one never minded his being in mischief from morning till night; and David was always the same, more like his father than any of them, and such a good elder brother. You would have been surprised to see

how David and Harry took the care from me, and stopped the work that I did to help out the insurance that David left for me ; and to see the interest that they took in keeping Walter and Paul in school, with only such odd jobs as they could do afterwards to bring in a little money ! We meant to send Walter to college, and he was almost ready, and Paul was half through the high school, and selling papers and collecting bills besides, till we were all as proud of him as could be. I used to wish that their father could see them all around me, before they grew up. Well, he did see them, three of them, while they had the dew of their youth. And you don't know what a comfort it was to me, when David came home to me alone that day from the sailing excursion, to think that their father was there to meet the boys, and that there was n't one of them but could look him in the face and say, 'I 've done my best for mother and us all,' nor one of them that was n't ready to take his place with David in the presence of the Lord himself. And then David and I just settled down to do our best, too, and make the most we could of every day of our lives, as how could we help doing with the thought of those four to make

us brave and strong and peaceful, thinking of the rest they 'd gone into, and that was waiting for us ; though that means more to me than to David, of course. Oh, no ; I have n't had a hard life. I often think I can't do enough for people who have so much less than I have."

" You seem to try to do for them," said Miss Wyman, with a smile that wavered a little. " I 'm so thankful that you came to live in the Square. These five years have made such a difference with me. You help me so in every way. I really think if I live long enough I shall come to be of some use in the world. You and David are like a perpetual object-lesson, if you only knew it. You know how to make the most of your life, just as you said. I 've tried to make the most of mine, too, but these five years have showed me more ways than I ever saw before. By the way, that cottage is taken, isn't it? I saw two rather forlorn-looking women, a tall one and a short one, going out of it one day lately. There 'll be one more family for you to be neighborly to. Mrs. North, if I come and live next door to you, will you take an interest in me, and send me the coffee from your breakfast table, and hot rolls occasionally, and call

on me as if I were the first lady in the land? I might appreciate it better than the Flynn's did, when they set you down as stuck-up, because you asked for your mold back, after you sent the wine jelly to Maggie."

Mrs. North laughed a little, without answering. Then she set her water-pot down, and came over to take a splint-bottomed chair near Miss Wyman. She looked slightly apologetic and a little embarrassed. The ever-changing tenants of the four-roomed cottage had been a source of much amusement to David and Miss Wyman, on account of their hold on the sympathies of the "pretty old lady." Perhaps the house held attractions for her because of its far-away likeness to that first "little home" of thirty years ago. Perhaps it was only that its occupants were always the poorest in the Square. However it might be, Mrs. North was possessed with a benevolent desire to "help out" her neighbors on that side, which partook slightly of the nature of her fondness for mischievous boys and their hop-scotch and marbles.

Miss Wyman looked at her friend fixedly for a moment, with a gleam of laughter in her eyes. "My dear Mrs. North," she said suddenly, "you

have something on your mind. It could n't possibly be that you have seen the newcomers, and that they are the most interesting family who have ever occupied that splendid mansion? And did you wish to introduce me to their acquaintance?"

"My dear, you will turn it into fun, so," said Mrs. North deprecatingly. "But really, Clarissa, I did see them; for they stopped in front of our house and looked at the flowers, and the old lady said, 'Beauty is but skin deep,' when she saw them, which made me think she must be a little weak in her mind — don't you think so? She said it very solemnly. But the other one, the little one, why I really wanted to know her. I should have liked to talk to her at once, only I was afraid they might not like to have me speak to them from behind the curtain, as I do to the children. She is such a pale little creature, with such clear gray eyes, just like a child's, and yet all the rest of her face is worn and anxious somehow. I should think she must have to work very hard; but she looked happy, too, and quite like a lady, though she certainly was shabby. She smiled at the flowers and said, 'Is n't it beautiful, Aunt

Bab?' to the other one ; and the old lady said, 'Skin deep! skin deep!' over again in a way that was really sepulchral. I feel very sorry for that girl. Not that she was exactly young ; but she made me feel like doing something to make her happy, just because, somehow or other, it did seem as if it would be so easy to make her happy. Her face lighted up so when she looked at the roses, and she had such a nice, gentle little voice in talking. Of course they did n't stay, but I was very glad when I heard they were coming. They are really quite superior to the Flynns, or anybody that has been in the house lately. I told David about them last night, and he said he rather thought he saw them on the train going into the city. He did n't notice the younger one, the other was so odd. David notices the colors people wear, you know, though one would n't think so, to see him ; and he was struck with her green scarf and purple bonnet, though I did n't notice them at all, I was watching the younger one so."

"Yes, and you want to help her out," said Miss Wyman, nodding wisely. "I 'm sure I hope she will not prove a delusion and a snare, as some of her predecessors have done."

“But I want you to help too” said Mrs. North, smiling more placidly than ever. “If she takes in work, you know, you could find some for her, and you could help me think of things. I ‘ll tell you what it is,” said the old lady, with animation, “that poor little thing appeals to me, Clarissa. I feel as if she had never had anything delightful in her life ; and I should like to show her what neighbors really are, and, if she ‘s what she looks like, make her bless the day she ever came into Barton Square. I just want to be neighborly to her, and I want you to be ready to help.”

“Very well,” said Miss Wyman with her light laugh, “I will. Generally I prefer my objects of benevolent effort a little better known; but if you have taken a fancy to an unknown young woman with a tired face that can light up, and want to make life in Barton Square a sort of sweet surprise to her, I ‘m all ready. I ‘ll take the part of fairy godmother if you wish. I ‘m just about the figure for it.” She put up her hand for a moment, as she spoke, and laid it on that of the elder lady. Miss Wyman showed affection in strangely childlike ways at times. “But in the

mean time," she went on, "you may as well give me the receipt for your superlative sunshine cake, so that I can have it made for my tea-party. The little cottage girl can wait, can't she, until she arrives on the scene of action?"

So the two drifted off into a discussion of household ways, which ended only with Miss Wyman's departure for home. The pretty lady went back to her bay window, and sat knitting and smiling behind the white curtain. The boys ran shouting after a hand-organ with a monkey attached, and peace reigned in Barton Square.

And Jane Dunbar, going out in a flutter of happiness, after numberless calculations, to buy six yards of cheese-cloth and a yard and a half of pink ribbon to beautify Maddy's window in the new home, guessed no more of what new pleasure was ready to drop into her colorless life, than the bird who builds his nest in the apple-tree in spring guesses of all the light and glory and beauty that will rustle and glow around him with the coming of summer.

CHAPTER III.

MOVING OUT.

AND now everything's gone," said Maddy with a little skip on the bare floor of the dismantled parlor. "I'm glad enough to ride out on the top of the express-wagon. Jane, of all the dismal, stuffy places we ever lived in, this was the worst! Look at that smoke! I'm glad we'll be where there is n't a factory two blocks off, after this. I sha'n't mind having people see where I live out there, if it *is* only a cubby-hole."

Jane smiled delightedly over the basket she was packing. It was pleasant to see Maddy in such good spirits. The elder sister was convinced that her idea of moving was the brightest one that had ever come into her brain, so far as Maddy was concerned. The child had never been so bright as during these last two weeks. She had gone away with a light step, and come back with a song on her lips more than once. Jane had wondered a little at the change. She thought that it was a happy thing that a new

home could make such a difference in a girl's life; and her own face grew brighter and took on a look of rest, even in the midst of hurry and work, at the sight of Maddy's enjoyment. The girl had not stopped her sister's delighted outpouring of plans since that first night. Jane had chattered and smiled and built air-castles to her heart's content during this fortnight; and if sometimes the younger sister's eyes grew a little dreamy in listening, and she occasionally answered in an absent manner that made it seem almost as if she were thinking of something else, Jane noticed nothing. Maddy was often abstracted, and it was pleasant not to have her secret thoughts gloomy, but happy, as they evidently were just now. Those four rooms had been talked over and over from floor to ceiling a dozen times. The very carpets had been turned and patched and eked with mats to make them fit, and the furniture had been arranged and rearranged in imagination, until Jane declared that she could see them all as plain as day. Only the plans for Maddy's room were not discussed. Jane had set her heart on surprising her sister.

“Would n't I have liked it if I had had a sur-

prise like that when I was her age," she said to herself, and she had laughed with pleasure as she folded away the cheese-cloth curtains in the top of her trunk, where they could be brought out as soon as it arrived at Barton Square. Jane had set her heart on having that room ready for Maddy when she should come home on the first night to the new house. She was thinking of it now over her arranging of Aunt Bab's treasures in the baskets, and rejoicing that Maddy had gone to bed early these last few nights, so as to give her time to make a new toilet cushion for the dressing-case, and crochet a pair of pink-and-white mats to go with it.

"We 'll try to make it a cozy cubby-hole," she said, nodding across the room at the bright young face opposite. "There, now, dear, you run along to the office, and try to get home as early as you can. I shall be watching for you. Perhaps you might manage to get off a little sooner than five o'clock to-day. If Mr. Kean could only let you come at four, so that you could take the train an hour earlier. How glad I am that you 're so near the station. Do you suppose you 'd like to ask him, Maddy? If he knew you were moving he might be able to let you off."

A slight cloud came over Maddy's face. "No; I don't think I should like to say anything about it," she said decidedly. "Five o'clock's early enough anyhow. It gives me nearly half an hour before train-time. I shall go down to the station and take a book, or else Mr. Kean will let me wait at the office for fifteen or twenty minutes. It's a great deal better not to ask him to let me go early. I shall get out there at a little past six, and I'm sure that'll give time enough to help a good deal in the evening."

"Good-by, then," said Jane, going out to the door to kiss her sister. "And, Maddy, you won't forget to be careful of yourself on the cars. But there! you would be, of course. You aren't one of those silly girls; only I wish I was rich enough to go in and out with you all the time. And you need n't help to-night, either. Aunt Bab and I will have things pretty much done by that time, going so early; I only wish my train went right away, so we could walk down with you."

But Maddy, with a vision of Aunt Bab and the basket before her, had evidently no share in the wish. She ran downstairs with a hasty good-by, and Jane watched her for a moment going swiftly down the street.

"She's a great deal too pretty for this ugly place," thought the admiring little sister. "In Barton Square she'll look more in keeping. And now, Aunt Bab, we must stir round. Only half an hour before we start, and I must say good-by to Mrs. Wilson, and get your things on and brush myself up first. It's a good thing it didn't rain to-day."

Aunt Bab was quite ready. She sat bolt upright near the door on a chair borrowed from Mrs. Wilson downstairs, with her hands folded stiffly in her lap. She had been sitting there since the load of furniture departed an hour before. It was as well to be ready whenever Jane was. Aunt Bab had been through some painful experiences within the last few days, and was correspondingly depressed this morning. It was a source of woe to the old lady to be obliged to look over her boxes and clear out the closet where her wardrobe hung; and her mind had been almost overwhelmed by the question of disposing of her hoarded treasures of silk and ribbon, bits of cheap lace and rolls of patchwork pieces, dresses long past wearing, and yet too dear to her heart to be gotten rid of, except as they were smuggled out of the

way without their owner's knowledge, and such a host of small belongings in bags and baskets, that Maddy had groaned audibly as Jane turned them out with a patient sigh.

"Why don't you burn the whole lot up?" cried Maddy. "What on earth does a woman sixty-five years old want of all those strings of beads and those china dogs and owls and that great heap of paper flowers? She never brings them out,—and lucky for us she does n't,—and she'd never miss them. Jane, you're really too good for this world, to put up with it and have all your own things crowded out of the way."

"But she likes them so," said Jane; "and there are so few things she does like, now, you know, and it does n't do me any harm to be a little crowded. She likes to open the boxes now and then, and see that they are all there, and you know it is n't much we can do for her, Maddy. Aunt Bab always tried to do her best for us. Anyhow, I got that green and red delaine out of the way last week, and she's never missed it, and I do think I can pack up one or two of those dreadful old flounced muslins and let them get left behind when we go, and give Mrs. Wilson a

a hint that they're no use. I'm going to put them up in a bundle, and then I'll give Aunt Bab a basket of her things to carry, and she'll never think of them."

Maddy had laughed mockingly at this strategy, but had not evinced the slightest sympathy for Aunt Bab's enjoyments. On the other hand, she had actually had the hardihood to seize upon the whole pasteboard box containing the limp and dingy paper roses and poppies, to which the old lady had clung since they were presented her after a church fair by some benevolent but short-sighted girl, who "thought that they might please anybody that was n't quite right in her mind," and had deliberately burned them all in the little cooking-stove the very night before removal, sitting down on the floor to poke the last dying ember with an exultant. "There's an end of you, and one more place made for some of Jane's things!" Maddy had been quite proud of her feat, and had not been able to keep the dimples quiet about her mouth for some time afterwards, even though Aunt Bab discovered the loss within half an hour, and lapsed into depths of gloom, from which she had not even yet emerged.

"I *was* going to leave you those flowers in my will," said Aunt Bab grimly. "But you won't get 'em now, I can tell you. You have n't got any feelings, Madeline Dunbar, and so I say, hear it who will. As for man, his days are as grass, and I ain't long for this world, and you 'll remember this day when you see me lying in my coffin."

Jane had done her best to comfort the defrauded old lady, with beseeching side-glances at the hard-hearted young sister, who held her pretty head erect and looked out of the window with dancing eyes through all the melancholy predictions of her aunt. Maddy was not going to express regret for her misdeeds.

"I could n't tell a lie," she said gravely, "not even to be remembered in Aunt Bab's will. I never was mercenary, Jane, no matter what faults I may have. Nothing shall make me say that I 'm sorry those flowers are out of the way, and I know you 're glad yourself, inside. Shall I send the beads and owls after them, or the blue muslin and that charming purple hat?"

But at this suggestion Jane exclaimed in such horror, that Maddy's self-control failed her entirely, and she fled to her own room with a burst of

laughter, which, being overheard by the indignant aunt, rendered her rigid for the rest of the evening. Jane thought over this scene with a little gentle warmth of amusement, as she moved about picking up a few last things, closing her bag, and tying on the recalcitrant cover of Aunt Bab's basket, where all sorts of odds and ends had been packed in a curious conglomeration, with the purple velvet hat on the top of all, and a bunch of dried grasses tied to the handle. What a child Maddy was sometimes! Jane was sorry for poor Aunt Bab, but she had enjoyed the fun, somehow, in spite of herself.

It seemed to the little dressmaker that a new life was beginning. She was like a child herself, in her eager pleasure. The vision of Barton Square had never been so charming. In a few minutes it would be time to go, and the first happiness of making her way into the undiscovered country of this new neighborhood was almost here. Jane began to sing, half unconsciously, at her work. She often sang to herself, in a sweet, gentle voice, childish songs that Aunt Bab liked, or hymns that had been favorites of her father's. Aunt Bab, and even Maddy, liked to hear her.

It was a pleasant sound, like the unconscious singing of a child. One could tell just how Jane was feeling by her singing, though, to be sure, as nobody ever was curious as to Jane's feelings, that was of no consequence.

“For now our pleasures are like the rivers,
Whose onward flowing is deep and free,”

she sang now, putting on her hat and gloves, and bringing Aunt Bab's shawl from the closet. “Come, Auntie,” she said, “we must go now. We 'll just stop and say good-by to Mrs. Wilson on the way out, and give her the keys of the rooms, and then we 'll be off. Don't look sad, dear, the new home will be pleasanter than this, ever so much.”

But Aunt Bab had her handkerchief at her eyes as they went down. “I hope I know my duty better than to be as heartless as that,” she sobbed. “This roof has sheltered us from—things — for many a year, Jane Dunbar, and we ought to feel bad at leaving it. I ain't going to refuse to shed a tear, if you do. And I don't believe that new place 'll be a circumstance to this. If we had n't moved I would n't have lost my flowers. Maddy 'll be sorry for that some day.”

“I know it, dear,” said Jane soothingly. “Now, Aunt Bab, don’t cry. Maddy did n’t mean any harm. I ’ll make you some more some day, if I can, and you ’ve got the beads and the ribbons and the china things and all that in your basket. And here ’s Mrs. Wilson to say good-by.”

Aunt Bab straightened herself up and bade farewell to the landlady with much sorrow. Mrs. Wilson looked mildly surprised at sight of the old lady’s grief. She and Aunt Bab had never been particularly fond of each other before. She was accustomed afterwards to tell about the leave-taking, and how her lodger had “cried fit to break her heart, and would have fell on her neck like the Bible itself, if she had n’t had a basket in one hand and a big umbrella in the other.” This tale was usually told on the occasion of renting the rooms which had been occupied by the Dunbars, and reflected much glory on the landlady who could inspire such affection.

The street was all in a glory of yellow sunlight sifting through the smoky air when the two opened the front door, and Jane turned back to drop her hint about the forgotten bundle. “You ’ll find everything all right upstairs, Mrs.

Wilson," she said hurriedly. "If there should be any little things left, they 're of no use, and they can just be thrown into the ragbag or burnt up."

But with the last words a startled look of recollection came over Aunt Bab's mournful face. She set the basket down on the steps and faced her niece with kindling eyes.

"Jane Dunbar! those dresses!" she said.

Little Jane fairly gasped. She had been so careful to put the bundle in one corner of the bedroom closet, where Aunt Bab might be expected to forget it. She had really not thought that the old lady would remember it until the unpacking time. And now Aunt Bab was waving her umbrella tremulously, and crying, "I never thought to see the day when all my things would be burnt up. Jane Dunbar, what would your pa say if he knew it?"

A rapid vision of herself and Aunt Bab on the way to the cars rose before the eyes of the perplexed head of the house. An umbrella, a valise, a basket, and a shawl-strap—these she had decided could be managed; but how could a bundle containing two ancient muslin gowns and a worn-out

silk mantle be added to them? Jane felt very much inclined to join her aunt in weeping as the handkerchief went to her eyes again.

“I would n’t have thought it,” cried Aunt Bab. “O Jane! that purple muslin was the one I wore to your Aunt Maria’s quilting-party, and the blue-and-yellow one was what I had on when I fell into the creek and Jonathan Green went in after me to get me out, and I always knew he meant something by it, if only his sister had n’t laughed so; and the colors run together on account of its being a bargain that had n’t been washed to see if it would run. And I never did think that you ’d uphold Maddy, and tell anybody to burn up my things this way.”

“But I did n’t know they were things you cared for so,” sighed guilty Jane. “Oh, we ’ll take them, Aunt Bab! Please don’t cry, for we must hurry to the train. I ’ll run up after them; I can manage, I know, and they ’re all tied up as small as I could do them. We can get along of course, if you care so much! Why, no, Aunt Bab, we won’t leave them for anything. There ’s a real big closet off our room at the cottage, you know.”

And so it came about that, a few minutes later,

a very anxious and tired little woman, carrying a shawl-strap, a bag, and a good-sized bundle, and accompanied by a limp and tearful old lady in an antique bonnet and a wonderful shawl, gay in green and crimson, appeared at the out-bound local train, and looked helplessly about for a place to bestow herself and her belongings.

The train was unusually full that morning. It was Monday, and the day before the opening of the schools, and the car was filled with laughing girls and young men on their way to the college town just beyond Jane's station. More than one of the gay young faces grew gayer with sudden amusement at sight of the melancholy old woman and the overburdened young one. Jane heard an unmistakable giggle as she passed through the aisle looking for a seat, and she was quite overwhelmed with anxiety at thought of what might happen if it should dawn on Aunt Bab that anybody was laughing at her.

“It's lucky that Maddy is n't here,” thought Jane, depositing her companion in a vacant half-seat, and standing beside her, weighed down with luggage, and looking a little beseechingly at the young lady who occupied the other half of the

seat, and who was evidently not pleased at having Aunt Bab for her companion.

She leaned over and whispered to the girl in front, and Jane heard her say something about a "walking fog." "A fog shot across by a rainbow," responded the other, and both fell into a silent fit of laughter, with their heads toward the window.

"They 're just full of laugh and can't hold in," she meditated; "and what on earth am I going to do? There 's only one other seat in the car, and if I leave her alone here, she 's sure to think they 're making light of her. Oh, dear! if I only did n't have *quite* so much to hold. I 'll just have to balance the shawl-strap on the edge of the seat, and stand up, and I really don't know but I 'll get pretty tired after getting all those things off this morning. Well, it 's only a little over half an hour, and the train is just starting."

The girl beside Aunt Bab looked round after recovering her gravity, and seemed oppressed by the sight of the little dressmaker with her bundles standing so close to her.

"There 's a seat farther up the car," she said with some emphasis, and frowned a little

when Jane answered that she did n't mind standing.

"It 's a pleasant change for her from the machine," remarked Aunt Bab distinctly. "But it ain't a pleasant change for me ! Jane, if I had left that blue-and-yellow muslin behind, I would have gone down to my grave sorrowing." The young lady bit her lip and turned to the window again, while Jane flushed painfully and looked distressed.

"Don't you think if you talk, the cinders will get in your throat, Aunt Bab ?" she suggested mildly ; and Aunt Bab responded that if Jane was afraid of cinders she might as well keep still herself. For her part she was n't afraid of anything.

Jane was thankful when the opening of the car door produced a diversion and set the girls about them to talking eagerly, leaving Aunt Bab to subside into silence. The conductor was coming down the aisle taking tickets,—a tall, stalwart man, with brown beard and a pair of bright, steady eyes that one noticed and liked as one saw him. He had a white rosebud in his buttonhole, and the girl nearest Jane turned to her neighbor with a pleased look at sight of it.

“It’s the conductor with the rose,” she said. “Is n’t it nice to see him again? I do think he’s splendid.”

The other girl nodded over the candy which she was eating.

“He’s a duck,” she said. “I don’t know what we’d do at the seminary without him. He looks after all us girls as if he was an uncle or something.”

And then in answer to some question from another, the two plunged into an enthusiastic, girlish description of this benevolent being,—his kindness, his good-nature, his pleasant ways, and his fondness for flowers.

“He always has a rose,” the first speaker said. “I’ve been going in and out to school for three years now. Some of us girls make up stories about him. I should n’t wonder a bit if he had had an early love, you know, and carried a rose in memory. I’ve heard of such things in books. Maybe her name was Rose. He does n’t look exactly romantic, but you can’t tell by looks, and it’s very interesting to think there’s something. Anyhow, he thinks everything of flowers. That was what made us girls notice him first. We felt

comfortable, somehow, with anybody that was so careful of his flower. And he 's so good to anybody that 's in trouble, or anything like that."

Jane listened with the pleased, bright look that was so much a part of her. She thought it was very interesting, and was quite inclined to believe the story of the early love-affair and the shadowy Rose. Jane was foolishly fanciful herself, and was always inventing stories about people whom she saw. They were usually pleasant stories ; perhaps because her own history had been so very uneventful, not to say dull. The little woman was full of interest as the hero of the rose came toward her, exchanging friendly greetings with almost all of the young passengers on the way. He was beside her in another moment, his own look growing interested as it fell on the shabbily dressed figure with its bundles and its worn, sweet little face, where the childlike gray eyes looked out so innocently and brightly from under the care-lined forehead. The girl beside Aunt Bab said good-morning with her happy young smile of welcome, and the conductor smiled back again in a fatherly sort of way as he took her ticket.

“On your way to school again, Miss Kitty?” he said. “Well, the car’s a pleasant sight this morning. I’m always glad when the seminary opens. Now, let me see. There’s a young lady farther along the car that looks as if she was pretty lonely, going out alone. I was right down sorry for her just now, she looked so homesick. Must be hard for a girl to start in that way, without any friends, and she’s going to your place, for I saw her ticket. And I said to myself, ‘There’s Miss Kitty down there, that’s just the one to make her all comfortable, and I have n’t a doubt that she’d be glad to change her seat, and then this lady could sit down with her friend. It can’t be very easy for her to stand up with those bundles, and of course you’d like to help her out; and it’s always pleasanter for young people to sit together, even if they don’t get acquainted. You see if that young lady does n’t brighten up from the time you go up there.’”

Miss Kitty laughed good-naturedly and took up her bag. “I’ll go,” she said. “I did n’t think of it before.”

Almost before Jane comprehended what was going on, she was sitting comfortably beside her

aunt, with her shawl-strap put out of the way in the rack, and the conductor nodding kindly in response to her thanks as he went on.

“And a very proper-spoken young man,” said Aunt Bab; “only what did he mean by young folks liking to be together? You and I ain’t young, Jane. Oh, dear me! when I think of days gone by, I feel like a pilgrim and a stranger, don’t you?”

But Jane was thinking happily and gratefully of the conductor’s kindness, and remembering that she had liked his looks when she went out to look at the cottage, and saying to herself, “It’s a real comfort that there’s such a man on this road. Perhaps he ’ll come to have an eye to Maddy as he does to these girls. I just wish he knew how much it ’s worth to me, this chance to sit still before I get to work. I do hope I can get things comfortable by the time Maddy comes, dear child.”

And the little woman had no suspicion that David North was thinking at that very moment, “If they are n’t mother’s new pets I ’m mistaken. I should know that beautiful combination of color on the old lady anywhere, though it ’s strange I

did n't notice the little one before. She must have been looking out the window. Mother 's right about her. She ought to be taken care of, and I 'm glad she 's coming into our place. Won't she have neighbors now, with mother and Miss Wyman on the lookout for her!"

CHAPTER IV.

MADDY'S ROOM.

THE lights were twinkling already up and down the streets of the suburb, as a graceful, slender figure alighted from the train. She had a face that drew more than one glance after it, as she went out into the twilight. Her eyes were shining, and the color was coming and going in her fair cheeks. One could hardly have imagined a pleasanter picture of youth and gladness. It was no wonder that her sister, coming briskly down to meet her, pronounced her the sweetest girl in the city, and, pausing a moment at the corner to wait for her, said within herself, "She 's had a good day, I can see ; and now how happy she 'll be when she sees all we 've done, and hears—oh, I never was so happy in my life, I believe !"

In fact, Jane's face was all alight with pleasure, as she slipped her hand through Maddy's arm, and hurried her off toward Barton Square.

"I was afraid I should be too late," she said eagerly. "I could n't get away sooner. O Maddy,

you don't know how much we 've done, and how nice it all is ! I never would have thought we could get settled so. Why, not counting closets, and there 's only three of those, you 'd think we 'd been there a week. And Aunt Bab is real cheerful, for her. I can finish it all to-morrow, and that 's the best of not having much. We 've laid the three carpets, and they look so much better, you would n't think that they were the same ; and, as I said, if you did n't *know* of the pictures and things standing round in the closets and the trunks that are n't all unpacked yet, you would n't think we 'd moved to-day. And it 's just because of the neighbors. Maddy Dunbar, there never were such neighbors ! ”

Jane paused for breath and walked on more quickly than ever, while Maddy looked amused and asked a question or two. Maddy's eyes were curiously bright, and wore a far-away look. Jane would have asked what she was thinking of, if there had not been so much on her own mind.

“ It was the lady next door,” she ran on. “ O Maddy, you will like her so ! I 'm so thankful we came here. She came to the door while we were just getting things out, and said she was a

neighbor and wanted to be the first to make us welcome, and was there anything she could do for us, or lend us, to help out? And she took hold of the carpets with me, and talked it over as interested as could be, and yet she was n't a bit prying, just interested and pleasant. And she sent us over some things at dinner-time, because she said we would be busy enough to be glad not to have to stop to cook. Such beautiful coffee, my dear, and *such* a plate of krullers, and a big pitcher of beef-tea that she had for herself, and there was more than she needed, and you would n't believe the good it did me, and how fast I got on afterwards. Why, nobody was ever so kind to me in my life before. And what 's more, she came out to her steps just as I was getting straightened round, and had come out to the door a minute before I started off for you, and she brought a great big bunch of flowers to make it bright for you, she said; for I 'd told her how I wanted to get things straight. I could have cried, it 's so long since we had flowers in the house, and I was so glad we had those glass vases to put them in. And do you know—her son is the conductor on the train that brought me and you, Maddy, and he was *so* kind this morning."

“They’re perfect miracles, are n’t they?” laughed Maddy. “I am glad of it, Janey. You don’t have anything nice, seems to me. If I had such stupid times always at home so, I’d—well, no matter what! I’m glad I have the going back and forth. It was real pleasant to-night, coming out.”

“Then you were n’t afraid or lonely, and nobody was rude?” said Jane. “Of course I did n’t suppose anybody could be to you, childie, but I’m glad it’s going to be pleasant. It would be nice if I could go about with you, so that you’d have some one to speak to.” Jane was blissfully unconscious that her conversations with Maddy were apt to be one-sided affairs.

“Well,” said Maddy slowly, “I had somebody to speak to to-night. Mr. Carling was on the train. He goes out to the college sometimes. He’s going to lend me another book next week. These two he has let me take now are so nice. This one is going to be a story. He says I have n’t ever read any fine stories at all, and I don’t suppose I have. He told me about the conductor, too. They all like him, and he always carries a rose about with him. I suppose if he lives next door,

it must be that place with all the flowers that you talked about so much. Is this the Square? and is that the house, that tiny one? Well, it *is* a baby-house!"

A baby-house the four-roomed cottage did seem, as the sisters went in, hurrying through the rooms, looking at the familiar furniture with new eyes, discussing every arrangement, with everything else forgotten for the time. From the little parlor with its well-known brown carpet, its haircloth chairs and sofa, and its table where one of the glass vases stood, filled with geraniums and asters, to the kitchen where the floor was clean and yellow, the kettle singing on the stove as if it had been at home there always, and the table set for tea with a fresh white cloth and blue dishes, which Jane only brought out on great occasions, the two went with faces pleasant to see in their satisfaction. Even Aunt Bab looked cozy beside that cheerful hearth where the wood was snapping so gayly, and where the baked potatoes, keeping warm under their white napkin, stood suggestively "all ready." Perhaps it was the flowers that gave such an air of festivity to the little place, in spite of the bare walls and the signs of recent occupation that lin-

gered in corners and behind doors. Those crimson and yellow and white asters and chrysanthemums held a whole world of pleasant thoughts in their graceful clusters. Jane took the vase in her hand and turned it about for Maddy to see before she set it on the table again.

"Did you ever see such lovely ones?" she said. "And, O Maddy! won't it be pleasant when we have the blue dishes in the little glass cupboard, and the turkey-red curtain across the corner by the sink! Is n't it nice to be all alone in our own house? I 'll get those pictures up to-morrow, and then it will be like home. Were n't you surprised to find the curtains up in the parlor? And, O Maddy, you must come upstairs now!"

Jane's moment of triumph had come. She was quite in a flutter as she led the way to Maddy's chamber, where the lamp had been set burning before she went to the station, and where the very bed was all made, white and fresh, with the pillow-shams done up extravagantly "out of turn" for the occasion. Would Maddy like it? Would it all be just as she would have chosen it for herself? Jane wished that it had been daytime so that her sister could have looked out into the little park

and seen the splashing fountain and the grass about it. She looked back smiling as she opened the door.

“Your room’s all ready, dear,” she said. “I sha’n’t try to settle ours much till to-morrow. Do you like it, Maddy?”

Maddy stood quite still, looking about her. She never had had such a pleasant place for her own. It seemed quite wonderful to her for a moment, the effect of whiteness and freshness, with the softly falling curtains and delicate pink ribbons. The new cushion stood on her bureau, with more pink and white beside it, and on the light stand was one of Jane’s best towels which mother had left behind. Mother’s picture was there, and Maddy’s little red Bible, and between them was a blue bowl of roses. Jane had carefully picked out every one from the flowers which Mrs. North had given her, and brought them up to beautify the little bower which she would have liked to make so charming for her darling. They lay drooping softly over the dish which held them, and added the last touch of tender color to the pretty picture. How could Jane have done it all! There was even a pink paper shade on the old-

fashioned lamp which stood on the bureau, and the little pictures of Faith and Hope which had always hung in Maddy's room were in their places opposite her bed.

"Do you like it, dear?" cried Jane joyously. "I wanted to surprise you, Maddy. Is it what you like? Pink always looked so pretty on you."

Maddy turned impulsively and threw her arms around her sister, bending her head to kiss her. There were tears in her bright eyes, much to Jane's amazement.

"Like it!" she cried. "O Janey! you're a great deal too good to me. Why, I never was in such a pretty place. You're the dearest girl in this world, and I ought to be ashamed of myself for not thinking more about you."

She looked at Jane in an odd way more than once that evening, after they had examined everything in the room and gone downstairs again; an odd way, half doubtful, half hesitating. Jane almost thought there was something on her mind; but when she went into the pink-and-white chamber to say good-night, and the girl threw both arms around her neck again, kissing her over and over as she had not done often lately, the elder

sister patted her hair and smiled down at her as if she had been a little child. What could her Maddy have to think about but her daily work and the small pleasures that came to her?

“There was n’t anything you wanted to say to me, darling?” said Jane, half laughing at her own fancy, and Maddy looked up once more, half doubtfully.

“No, no,” she said after a moment. “What could there be, Janey? You’re too good to me, that’s all. There is n’t anything to tell you about, if I wanted to tell you anything. I wish I was as good as you are, Jane, only you are a sort of baby sometimes—if you are so much older. But I mean a nice one, you dear old thing. There, good-night!”

And Jane kissed her child and went away to Aunt Bab. Maddy might be odd now and then, but she was a dear girl, and the elder sister’s heart was very warm and loving as she lay down to sleep. Yes, this had been a happy day for Jane Dunbar.

CHAPTER V.

AN INVITATION TO TEA.

THE sunshine lay warm and still across the threshold of the cottage. The door stood open, letting in the pleasant sights and sounds of the beautiful September day — one of those days when there seems a glamour over the commonest things, and when every color in earth and sky appears brightened and mellowed and intensified, as if, somehow, the whole world were drawing deep breaths of happiness before the fleeting beauty of the fair weather should quite vanish. Aunt Bab, rocking stiffly in the square of light before the window, looked like a solitary speck of gloom in a world of sunshine, though Jane knew her well enough to understand that she was “taking comfort” in her way, and that the doleful song which she was crooning was only expressive of a general sense of well-being.

“Though I wish she’d sing something more like what I feel myself,” thought Jane with a happy little smile, as Aunt Bab’s voice rose and

fell waveringly in that most dismal of Watts' hymns:—

“There are no acts of pardon passed
In the cold grave to which we haste;
But darkness, death, and long despair
Reign in eternal silence there.”

“If *my* mind ever gives out,” went on the listener, inwardly, “which I pray God it won’t, for what should we do if it did? — I hope I’ll be allowed to keep the bright part of it, instead of the sad part. Poor Aunt Bab! I ought to do a great deal to make her comfortable.”

Jane had been singing herself over the sewing-machine. Her heart was like a lark within her this sunshiny day. It was so delightful to look up from her work and see the fountain tossing in the square, the warm, yellow glow over the brick houses opposite, and the dropping leaves that were filling the air already in a golden shower. The schools were in session, so that there were no boys and girls to walk on the edge of the fountain or shout and tumble about the scattered grass; but one or two baby-carriages were standing in sight, and one rosy, laughing little one was leaning out to watch the bright water, with dimpled hands clapping. Jane smiled as she saw him. She was very fond of children.

Click ! click ! click ! went the sewing-machine, and the heart of its owner kept time with gentle gladness. How could Jane be thankful enough for the new, pleasant home, the quiet in the air, the sunlight without and within, and that little picture in the square ! And to think that she should have slipped into it all so easily ; that the house was all in order from one end to the other ; that Aunt Bab had settled down as if they had been living in Barton Square all her life ; that Maddy was in the best of spirits ; that work had actually begun, and that for the first time in her memory Jane knew what it was to have real neighbors ! Her heart glowed with a grateful warmth at thought of the beautiful old lady who had done so much for her already. There she was now, passing on her way from market, and the little dressmaker leaned out to smile and nod, with a joyous sense that she had some one to bow to ; some one who was glad to see her, and who left such a smile behind, that the solemn face at the window relaxed, and Aunt Bab remarked graciously : —

“ If I’d married Jonathan Green and been well-to-do, and had n’t had the care of you, Jane, I

think I would have looked just about like Mrs. North by now ; leastways there would have been a family resemblance. But I did n't and there ain't, and I 'm like a pelican in a wilderness, and yet I don't complain."

Jane did not know that her own eyes were so sweet and dewy as she looked out, that the pretty old lady was thinking of her, with what began already to be almost affection, as she went into her house.

"Dear child!" said Mrs. North to herself. "She makes one warm to her the minute she looks at one. It was a real providence that sent her here ; for I 'm likely to grow as fond of her in her way as I am of Clarissa, and what a pleasure it is to be able to help her out a little ! I must have them in to tea in a day or two, so that David can get acquainted. That pretty girl will enjoy coming, I know, and little Jane will be delighted. Why should n't they come to-night ? I 've ordered peaches enough, and it won't take a moment to run over and ask Clarissa. I must have her here, for I want them to know each other, and she 'll enjoy it too."

And so, half an hour afterward, Jane had another

glimpse of her new friend as she passed across the Square, stopping a moment to pat the laughing baby on both cheeks as she went by, and going up the steps of the largest house, the same house from which the quaint little figure of the deformed lady had come the day before, when Miss Wyman walked across to the four-roomed cottage and almost took away the breath of the astonished dress-maker by ordering a cashmere wrapper and a pair of servant's aprons to be finished at once, with promise of more work if these were satisfactory. Jane had almost cried with relief and happiness after her strange visitor had gone. She had had hard work to keep the tears from dropping on the soft folds of delicate blue, which were actually to be trimmed with swan's-down.

“The prettiest work I’ve had to do since I can remember!” she had cried, holding it up as Maddy came in. “And to think of having work come in so soon, and she’ll speak for me to her friends she says, if this is right.” Maddy had looked pleased, too, though she had shaken her head a little doubtfully over the “if.”

“You can do the sewing all right,” she had said; “but you don’t have ideas enough, Jane. Of

course just a wrapper that she told you all about you could get on with, but when she comes to want other things — but then, if she 's deformed and has to wear sacks and so on, you can do her work I suppose, especially if she knows just what she wants done. It 's a pity you can't think of things more, Jane."

And Jane had answered, with some anxiety, that it was probably because she had to stay in with Aunt Bab so much, so that she could not go about to openings ; and that she was thinking of taking another fashion magazine, only they cost so much ; and finally, that she was going to do her very best, and she was quite sure that she could make Miss Wyman's wrapper at any rate. She had been troubled by Maddy's words, and had even grown a little worried in thinking them over in the night-watches, but she had put the anxiety out of her mind with all the decision she could.

" I won't be foolish and make myself nervous enough to be in danger of not cutting straight," she thought wisely. " Of course it 's the best chance I ever had, and if I should spoil it, it would be dreadful ; but I 'll just trust to the Lord, and see if I can't do it. Anyhow, Miss Wyman does n't

look as if she cared to have everything just in the finest style there is. If she did she 'd go to somebody else."

Maddy would have been amazed and a little scornful if she had known that her sister actually put up a little prayer for help and guidance as she took up the blue cashmere the next morning; but Jane's heart had grown calm and strong again as she worked, and the gratitude and happiness had quite taken possession of her as the morning wore away.

She began to sing again softly, as she saw Aunt Bab nodding in her chair. Jane was accustomed to sing Aunt Bab to sleep almost every day, although the old lady never suspected it, and would have been much incensed if she had guessed that she was being treated "like a baby."

When Mrs. North came back from her visit to Miss Wyman, she smiled to herself looking through the doorway at the little picture,— the stiff figure of the old lady with head against the back of her chair, the mouth drooping even in sleep, and the busy little form of the dressmaker bending over her work, and smiling as she sang over and over:—

“Weel may the keel row,
That my laddie’s in.”

It was not exactly a lullaby, but if Jane had chosen one, her aunt would have been sure to tell her to sing something more lively; that that thing sounded as if some one was sleepy, and if anybody was it was not Aunt Bab.

“Could you step to the door a minute, Miss Jane?” said Mrs. North softly. “I wanted to see you, but I won’t come in and wake your aunt.”

Jane came forward, brushing off a thread or two from her gown. “I’m so glad to see you,” she said brightly. “Could n’t you come in, Mrs. North? Aunt Bab does n’t wake very easily when she’s once off.”

But Mrs. North sat down on the little seat at the door, instead. “How pleasant you begin to look!” she said, with an interested glance into the little parlor. “And you’re working already, are n’t you? Miss Wyman told me that you were making her a wrapper. She’s a good customer to have, my dear. I am very glad that Miss Wyman has come to you.”

“So am I,” said Jane heartily. “I was so glad and thankful, you can’t think, when she came

over. And do you see what pretty stuff it is? I do like pretty things so much. That's why I always like to work at the baby things that I knit for the stores. They're so soft and white. One wants to see the people that will buy them, and hear them say how pretty the baby looks in them. I always have a good time when I'm doing pretty things. I should fill our rooms all up with tidies, and so on, if I had time."

"The room looks very pleasant now," said Mrs. North. "I was glad when I saw that Japanese scroll yesterday. Such a rich, bright color, and how it lights up that wall. It was quite an inspiration."

"That was because of yours in your dining-room," said Jane, flushing with pleasure. "I could n't help getting it, after I knew that I should have this work. Maddy thought it was pretty too. I put it up to surprise her when she came in last night. I wish I could just make the whole place pretty for Maddy; but I mean to watch my chance to get little things now and then. It did n't seem much use when we were in the old place, but here it all makes such a difference."

"Yes; I found out the good of having a little

house when I first had a home of my own," said Mrs. North; "and if one can't get everything all at once, one enjoys brightening up, bit by bit, all the more. I 'm sure your house looks as cozy as can be, already."

"I think it 's the flowers that make it look so," said Jane with a grateful look at the geraniums and asters that still stood on the table. "It 's a long time since we had flowers. You don't know how pleased Maddy is with the roses that I put in her room. She has worn one or two away with her every day since, and they look so pretty. I can't half thank you for it all."

"But I have more than I can use," said Mrs. North. "I must send you more. And now I must run away, for I only stopped to ask you to come in to tea with me to-night, if you will. Miss Wyman will be there too. I should like to have you know her, and my son will come in about nine. You must stay the evening through, so as to meet him. You must come to know your new neighbors."

How little Jane flushed and brightened as Mrs. North spoke! An invitation to tea! When had such a thing come to her before? Was there ever

such a kind woman in the world, thought the dressmaker; and then her mind flew to Aunt Bab, asleep in the rocking-chair, and sure to be reduced to the extremity of woe if such a thing as leaving her was suggested. Jane's eager face fell. It had been very eager and bright a minute before. She had felt for one instant something as she had been used to feel when she had talked about the visionary ship with her mother; the ship that was to bring birthday parties and all sorts of childish good times among its freight.

"Oh, I should like it so much!" she said; "but you know I must n't. There's Aunt Bab. I can't leave her; and, you know, she is n't"—

But Mrs. North had seen the sudden change of countenance. "Oh, you must bring your aunt with you, of course," she said. "I am sure we shall not tire her. She can sit as quietly as she would at home, and we shall all be glad to see her. I should be quite disappointed not to have you all, and I want to see your sister particularly. Such a pretty young thing! I always want to know girls like that, and one does not often see such a beautiful girl as your sister."

So Jane, all in a flutter of happiness, accepted

the invitation and went back to her sewing, while her neighbor said good-by, and departed to oversee the preparation of peach shortcake and sponge-cake, with a heart as light as a girl's. And the only drawback to the pleasure of the occasion was Aunt Bab's sense of injury on finding that some one had been to the house during her nap, and that she had not been aware of the fact.

"You must have trod about as a ghost," said Aunt Bab in disgusted accents. "I have n't slept more than two winks, and I should have heard you if you had n't gone still on purpose. But it 's the lot of man, and they that live by the sword shall perish by the sword."

It was not until her aunt had been duly consoled and peace had settled on the household once more, that Jane had time to think of the important question of dress. Of course there was nothing for her to do but to wear her Sunday gown of sober black, a little worn and shabby, to be sure, but then as Jane had said, in deciding that it might be made to last another winter, "It showed that it had been good once."

"I 'm glad I 've got that pretty white lace that was mother's," thought Jane; "and I don't believe

but what a kerchief will be quite becoming to me, and perhaps — I don't know — but I might wear a flower or two like Maddy. Just purple asters would n't be too gay, seems to me, and I 'd like to look nice, though of course they 'll look at Maddy instead of me. I wonder if Mr. North will remember me. He was so kind that day. He 'll be sure to remember Maddy, anyhow. I must run out and get the child a bit of *crêpe-lisse* ruching and baste it into her best dress before she gets here. I 'm so glad that Maddy got that summer silk when they were so cheap. She 's looked so nice all summer, and it 's just the thing to wear to-night."

Jane always insisted that Maddy should use her earnings for herself alone. She did not need them, she always said. If Maddy had anything left over she might as well put it in the savings bank. Nobody knew when a rainy day might come ; and as for helping the family, was n't it helping to take the clothing of one off from Jane's shoulders ? So Maddy had dressed more prettily than ever before during the last year, and Jane had been thankful and enjoyed the pleasure of her sister in every little purchase which she had made.

“And Aunt Bab must wear her best cap,” went on the head of the house; “and if we can persuade her into leaving off ribbons and not carrying one of those dreadful figured handkerchiefs, she ’ll look quite nice. I wonder what Maddy ’ll say, and I wonder if Aunt Bab will do anything very funny. I do hope not! There! I must work with all my might to get my day’s work done before it ’s time to get ready. What good times I am having these days!”

And Jane caught up the blue cashmere, and turned to the sewing-machine with such ardor that the room rang with the whirring sound for the next few hours.

Maddy came home from the station alone that night for the first time since the removal, and Jane laughed outright as she caught her astonished look at the general air of festive preparation visible in the cottage parlor. There was Aunt Bab bolt upright and impressive in her best cap, with a large bow of somewhat faded green ribbon on her breast, Jane having reluctantly yielded this point in consideration of her aunt’s consenting to forego the ancient splendors of her girlish gowns, and array herself in plain brown merino.

There was little Jane, bright and full of gentle excitement, with mother's lace about her neck and a knot of purple flowers among the soft white. Jane wearing flowers ! Maddy burst out laughing at the sight.

" Why, Jane, what on earth is going to happen ? " she cried. " Are you going to the opera, you and Aunt Bab ? Why did n't you wear a wreath of roses in your flowing locks and be done with it ? " Maddy was not in one of her loving moods tonight ; Jane saw that at a glance. She tried to laugh in response, blushing a little painfully in spite of herself as she answered.

" Well, I don't wonder you don't know what to make of us," she said. " You see, we don't go out to tea very often, and we don't exactly know how to get ready. I did n't have anything to wear but the lace, and I thought it would cover up my dress a little ; and you know white always did look better on me than anything else. It 's to Mrs. North's, dear, and Miss Wyman is going to be there, and your dress is all ready for you on the bed with some nice ruching all basted in, that I ran out to get this afternoon, so that I could n't go down to meet you. Did you miss me, dear ? You were n't afraid, were you ? "

“Of course not,” said Maddy. “How much protection do you suppose you are, Jane, you little goosey? So we’re going out to tea, are we? What on earth possessed you to go and take Aunt Bab?” The last words were spoken on the stairs as the sisters went up to Maddy’s room, and Jane answered hurriedly in a whisper:—

“Oh, don’t let her hear you, dearie. Mrs. North said particularly to bring her. I’ll keep her from talking just as much as I can, and oh, please don’t say anything about that bow! It was the very best I could get her to do.”

“It’s perfectly absurd to take her,” said Maddy with an annoyed frown. “I don’t see why she could n’t have stayed alone for once. See here, Jane, suppose you go alone, and I’ll stay and look after her. I’ve got a book that I want to read anyhow, and I’m sure I don’t care anything about going over there. I have n’t a doubt she only asked us to be kind to us, and I hate to have people kind to me.”

But Jane’s protest at this proposition was so troubled and grieved that Maddy began to change her dress in a somewhat repentant mood, while her sister hovered about her with some return of

pleasant excitement over the arrangement of her hair and the becoming effect of the ruffles on her gown.

“ You look as sweet as a rose,” cried Jane affectionately. “ There now, dear, put some flowers at your throat. See, I’ve picked out this lovely pink bud and this white one and these leaves. Was n’t it nice that she sent buds that would open one after another so? Shall I pin them on? ”

“ Well, no, you need n’t,” said Maddy, laughing in an amused way. “ O Jane! anybody would think we were going to a regular ball. No, I rather think I can make them look better than you can.” She glanced at Jane’s asters as she spoke, with a funny little pursing of her lips. It was comical for Jane to be thinking of adornment.

“ Don’t I look all right? ” said Jane with a sensitive blush. “ Well, nobody will think about me at all you know, dear, when they’ve got you to look at.”

“ Oh, you’re well enough,” said the younger sister, with a final glance into the mirror. “ Lace and woolen don’t exactly go together you know, but it’ll do. Come now, if we’re going. I don’t feel like it, but I suppose we’ll enjoy it when we

get there, though if anybody tries to patronize me I shall just be horrid."

"But nobody will," said Jane with a little dropping of her happy voice. "You must n't be foolish, Maddy; Mrs. North 's enough older to have it lovely for her just to be kind to us. Go down, dear, please, and I 'll come in a minute."

A few moments later Maddy noticed that the purple flowers had been taken off and left in Jane's own room, and that her sister had come down rather quieter than usual, and with a little look of anxiety that did not pass away until they were fairly out of the door on the way to Mrs. North's. Maddy could not help thinking that Jane was very foolish, and she had an inward feeling that the little bit of color had been rather pretty, and that even if lace and woolen were inappropriate the creamy white was the most becoming thing that could have been found for the fair, little, delicate face beside her. But she said nothing of this as she went down the steps. Jane ought to judge for herself, and Maddy did not feel like saying flattering things to-night.

But uncomfortable thoughts were summarily banished from the minds of both sisters when they

were fairly inside Mrs. North's sitting-room, gathered around the little fire which was so pleasant on this first chilly evening, with Miss Wyman in a low rocker before the hearth, knitting and talking in her odd and charming way, while the pretty old lady sat smiling on her guests like the very personification of hospitality. Jane wished that she had known that Miss Wyman would have her work. She might have brought over the little socks on which she was engaged just now, but after all it was pleasant just to sit and do nothing for a few hours. The room was such a picture of home comfort that it was a delight to look about at the soft gray walls, with their photographs of Penelope Boothby and Angel Heads and the Light of the World ; the brackets which held ivies and ferns in brown flower-pots ; the tables, where one or two illustrated books drew Jane's eyes again and again ; the wide, old-fashioned couch with its puffy, chintz-covered pillows ; the white curtains which shut off the bay-window with its fragrant mass of plants, just brought in for the winter ; and the pretty, low bookcase which it was such a surprise to hear had been made by Mr. North himself out of shoe-boxes ebonized and

supplied with shelves. Then the glimpse through the open door of the dining-room, where the rosy servant—the very servant looked cozy and comfortable at Mrs. North's—was flitting about, setting the table with quaint sprigged china which gave something the effect of a flower garden, by contrast with the polished dark table which had once belonged to Mrs. North's mother. It was all charming! Jane could not help giving a contented little sigh as she sat in the corner with Aunt Bab beside her, and Maddy opposite, growing brighter and prettier with every minute of Miss Wyman's merry talk. It was a story of the kitchen-garden patronized by Miss Wyman and some of her friends; and the room was full of laughter as the clear voice rippled on, giving a glimpse of the band of delighted children in their white caps and aprons as they gathered about the tables where the pretty toys reposed which were to teach them so much of household ways. How pleasant it must be to do good in such ways! Jane looked with something of wonder at the face so near her, where pain and sorrow had left such marks behind, and yet where the child heart looked out dauntingly through those “dove's eyes.” Miss Wyman

must be very brave. Jane was glad to know such a woman. She was glad, too, to have Maddy come into such an atmosphere of rest and enjoyment. In fact, Jane watched her child somewhat as a woman of fashion might have done the girl's "coming out" party. She had a vague feeling that this was "the beginning of things" for Maddy, and it was pretty to see the unconscious pride with which her eyes followed the graceful figure as the party went out to the dining-room.

What a pleasant evening it was! How the talk ran on, as they drifted back to the parlor after tea; how Jane had a chance to look at the tempting books to her heart's content, with Miss Wyman beside her, putting in all sorts of interesting comments. How the sweetness came out in Maddy's face as Mrs. North went with her to the window, and the two stood among the flowers talking "as if they had always known each other," thought the watchful sister, glancing at them over the pages in her lap. And how good Aunt Bab was sitting in dignified silence in the chimney corner, with the cat in her lap, and even falling into a peaceful little nap and waking up as calm as ever after it, to the unspeakable relief of the two nieces,

who had been glancing at each other in dread of an outburst of injured tears from the time they saw that the old lady was asleep. And when at nine o'clock a merry whistle was heard outside, and Mrs. North went to the door to let in "her boy," how pleasant it was to receive his hearty greeting and to drop into talk with him. He remembered Jane as well as Maddy ; spoke to Aunt Bab in a deferential way, which brought an actual smile to the old lady's face, and set her talking of Jonathan Green for a week afterward ; and settled into a chair to discuss the pictures in such a friendly manner that nobody could help admitting that it was pleasanter after his arrival. There was music a little later, Mrs. North sitting straight and charming at the piano and playing accompaniments with her pretty, old-fashioned fingering, while David sang his sailor songs and even drew Maddy into a duet or two, which brought a new color to the girl's cheeks and called forth delighted applause from Miss Wyman and the mother.

"It's really a very sweet voice," said Miss Wyman. "Why, David and your sister ought to sing often. That rich contralto is just the thing for his tenor. Listen now ! How they blend ! She ought to take lessons."

“I wish she could,” said Jane with a proud brightening of her loving eyes. “I was glad that she could learn something about music in the schools. Mother always sang so beautifully, and Maddy’s voice is like hers. Yes, it’s lovely to hear them together.”

“‘So sweet to hear, so good to see,’” quoted Miss Wyman with a smile. “It’s really a pretty picture, is n’t it? Mrs. North so fair and sweet-looking with her beautiful white hair, and David so big and strong, and that lovely girl. I don’t wonder you’re proud of your sister.”

“It’s very wicked to be proud,” struck in Aunt Bab. “Don’t you indulge in it, Jane.

“‘Let me be dressed fine as I will,
Flies, worms, and flowers exceed me still.’”

The grave voice was so distinct in this admonitory utterance, and the contrast between the implication of the verse and the plain little figure of the dressmaker was so startling, that the duet suddenly ended in a laugh, which Mr. North slurred over as a cough, and Maddy concealed by turning to a pile of music, while Mrs. North rose from the piano and began hastily to plan for future

evenings together, and a series of songs which should quite bring back the feelings of old days when "the boys" had been accustomed to gather about their mother every evening and make the room ring with gay choruses.

"It's a real pleasure to think of what good times we can have," said Mrs. North, and Maddy dimpled with enjoyment in reply.

"And it's a real pleasure to me," said Jane a few minutes afterward, when the little company were saying good-night in the hall, "a real comfort and pleasure to think that Mr. North is on the cars that Maddy comes in and out on. I shall feel so comfortable about her now. I did wish that I could go with her always, but of course I could n't."

"I am glad, too, that we shall be neighbors on the road as well as at home," said Mr. North, smiling down at the girl benignantly, as if she had been a pretty child. "Oh, I'll see that no harm happens to your sister, Miss Dunbar. I should n't at all wonder if we became great friends before the winter is out." But though Maddy smiled back as she went out of the door, a look of annoyance was on her face as she turned to her sister a moment afterward.

“Now, Jane,” said Maddy, “you ought to stop talking about me as if I was a baby. What on earth do I want of anybody looking after me? Don’t you suppose I know how to behave on the cars, or do you think I’m likely to fall off them and get run over if I’m not watched? I just wish you’d remember that I’m nearly twenty years old, and no more a child than you are yourself, nor quite so much sometimes.”

Maddy was evidently out of humor, and Jane made haste to explain that she had quite given up considering her sister as a child. “Only you know, dear, I can’t quite get out of the way of wanting to take care of you,” she said. “Don’t you mind, for you know it’s only because I’ve looked after you so long. You had a good time, did n’t you, dear? Come into my room and talk it over, won’t you, while I’m helping Aunt Bab?”

But Maddy’s mood had changed since leaving the quiet atmosphere of Number 15, and she had no desire for conversation. Instead, she kissed her sister good-night with perhaps a twinge of compunction, and shut herself up in the pink-and-white chamber. There was a light under her door for a long time. Jane thought that she must be

reading, and would have liked to beg her to put out the lamp and take the sleep she needed, but Maddy would not like to be disturbed to-night, she was sure. The clock had struck one before the light disappeared.

Jane looked at her sister a little anxiously the next morning; but Maddy was bright and sunshiny again, dancing about the house as if she had never known a cloud, and leaving an echo of song and laughter about her as she went away, singing gayly before she opened the door the chorus of one of Mr. North's songs: —

“Sailing, sailing over the stormy main,
Many a stormy wind shall blow, ere Jack come home again.”

Well, Maddy was a queer child, but a lovely one, as Jane had said over and over since she began to grow-up. And it was evident that the little outing of the evening before had done her good. Yes, this was the beginning of pleasanter days for Maddy. Her sister fell into a loving day-dream over her work; a dream in which such preposterous air-castles were erected, that the younger girl would have opened her eyes in blank amazement if she could have known of them. But day-dreams were no new things to Jane Dunbar, though nobody had ever credited her with a large share of imagination.

CHAPTER VI.

A GRAY HAIR.

THAT first delightful evening at Mrs. North's was only the forerunner of many like it. It seemed quite wonderful to Jane Dunbar, the difference that had come into her life through that change of residence. Long afterward she looked back to those first few months in Barton Square with the same feeling of tender thankfulness which grew within her at the time, thinking of all the new enjoyments that had come to her and to Maddy in the four-roomed cottage. The days flew by, filled to the brim with work and care as they had always been, but there was a new under-current below the outward hurry. Jane came to love every glimpse of the Square to be had from the little front room, across the sewing-machine. The trees grew dear to her as she traced their branches against the sky, whether their background were shining blue or the leaden gray of autumn and winter storms. The children who played about the fountain came to be familiar friends, and she

knew many of them by name, listening to their calls to each other. The very babies were watched and apportioned to their particular homes about the green, and Jane came to nod and smile to more than one of them as they passed her window. She had always been fond of watching the people about her and picturing to herself the lives which they must all lead, so distinct and apart from each other ; and this simple little pleasure became more and more a habit with her. There were such interesting people in Barton Square. From the "young couple" next door, who were so like two children in their enjoyment of life, to the stirring Mrs. Green at the corner, and her constant warfare with the pervading boys, every one was a source of enjoyment to the watcher in the four-roomed cottage. Some of the neighbors had found her out and brought work now and then. Miss Wyman had kept her promise of "speaking" for her to friends, and Jane was in a fair way to have her time as fully occupied as it had ever been in the old home. She was glad of this ; for the expenses of moving had been heavy, and Aunt Bab was ailing this winter and needed little luxuries which caused some pinching in other directions. Mrs.

North sometimes said that Jane worked too hard and ought to take a holiday now and then ; but Jane always shook her head brightly and said, "Oh, it 's easy working nowadays ! Besides, I 'm used to it and don 't need rest except what I get at your house."

It became gradually a kind of habit for Maddy to spend an evening or two a week with Mrs. North, running over after tea and staying long enough to try one or two songs with Mr. North. Sometimes Jane and Aunt Bab went too, when there was no work to be done and the old lady was in a mood for visiting ; but often the head of the house sat alone during the evening, watching for sounds from the next door, smiling over her machine as the clear voices of David and Maddy floated over to her, or sitting close to the window and listening, with a crack open, when there was no sewing to keep her busy and Aunt Bab had gone to bed.

Sometimes sitting so, she saw Mr. North coming home, and now and then he stopped and spoke to her through the window, before going in. Once or twice, too, Mrs. North had come in for the evening visit at the cottage, instead of staying at

home; and then the window curtains were drawn back and the light turned as high as possible that Mr. North might know that he was to come in.

• Maddy generally ran to open the door for him, and Jane had come to think that her sister never looked so pretty as when she came into the room beside the tall, broad-shouldered conductor. Maddy and Mr. North were certainly great friends. It seemed to Jane that Maddy was gaining every day in such companionship.

How could it be otherwise? Jane herself had never passed such pleasant hours as those when she sat by the fireside at No. 15, with the pretty old lady beside her, and Mr. North and Maddy engaged in some lively discussion near by, or trying over new songs with abundant laughter over their mistakes.

“It does anybody good to be with such people, and I’m so glad for Maddy—and myself too,” the little woman would say to herself, and often her eyes would grow soft and misty with looking forward into some pleasant land of dreams where nobody ever followed her.

Yes, Maddy was becoming more womanly, more beautiful, more independent, day by day, though

her wayward moods were even more frequent than of old, and though Jane was growing to feel somehow a slight wall of separation between herself and the child of her love—a wall so slight that it seemed often as if it were only a foolish fancy.

“It’s only because she’s growing so much older,” thought the elder sister patiently; “and Maddy never did care to talk to me about her feelings much. I wish I was a little nearer her own age. Ten years make a good deal of difference, and then I never was like Maddy anyhow. I wonder—I wonder if she has anything on her mind;” and then with a little laugh and blush the foolish woman would fall into her dreams again, and sometimes let her work lie idly in her lap for minutes at a time while she pictured Maddy as she might be in a few years from now. It was a curious fact that the feelings of “difference” between her sober self and the pretty darling of the household came home to Jane with a new sensation occasionally this winter. She looked at herself in the glass more than she had been used to do, and was struck with the signs that her youth was really passing away, and that there were little faint lines in her forehead which told of constant

care and thought. One morning there was a white thread in the soft hair that was fine and silky in spite of its dull color, and Jane was amazed to feel an inexplicable choking in her throat as she drew it out. What could be the matter with her? Why should she begin to care about herself now, when she had always been the same, and there was not the faintest gleam of beauty to be lost by the passing of her girlhood?

“As if anybody cared how I look, or as if it made any difference whether I turned into fifty old women all at once,” cried Jane with a sudden rush of hot tears, which were brushed away the next moment. “Jane Dunbar, I believe you’re growing crazy!”

But for all her indignant self-condemnation, the feeling was there, and a verse of one of Maddy’s poems would float through the head of the dress-maker for several days after the discovery of that little silver thread:—

“Something sweet
Followed youth with flying feet,
And will never come again.”

“Though why on earth should I feel so, when I’m happier than I ever was in my life, and though

I never was like other girls, even when I was Maddy's age, I can't see," she murmured. "Well, I 'd better go to saying Bible verses or something, to get it out of my head. It 'll never do to get to thinking of myself in this way."

Nobody knew of these little passing clouds. Jane's face was as bright as ever, and she petted Maddy and cared for Aunt Bab and worked at her dressmaking as she had done all her life. If she were a little more careful of her own appearance now when Mrs. North was likely to drop in at any time, and when Miss Wyman was always stopping to leave some bit of work or other, spending half an hour or so in talk over it, that was nothing to be wondered at, and Maddy noticed it and was silently approving. Jane never was pretty, of course; but a little "fixing up" did a great deal for her, Maddy considered.

"If it had not been for Aunt Bab, the four-roomed cottage would not have been at all an unfit place to receive callers now," she said, looking about her with some pleasure, as she came in on one of those frosty evenings which always set her cheeks glowing, and brought a deeper sparkle into her brown eyes. The room was warm and

cheerful, with a fire shining clear and red through the little "base-burner," and a sewing-machine in the corner with its green baize cover thrown over the folded work which lay on it. Aunt Bab was in the kitchen, and Jane sat knitting with a long white apron over her black dress. Jane had taken to wearing white aprons a great deal lately, perhaps because they covered up the worn front of her every-day gown; though Maddy did not think of that. She was not accustomed to noticing whether her sister was shabby or not.

"Yes, we never did have such a comfortable place, as you say so often," said the girl, coming in to warm her hands by the fire. "One could almost invite people here, though it is so tiny, especially with the stove."

"Yes, it's something to be thankful for," said Jane, counting stitches between her words. "And we do have callers now, don't we, Maddy? There is n't anybody to invite but the neighbors, and I'm sure we have visits from them quite often."

Maddy raised her head a little, with a pretty lifting of her delicate eyebrows. "Oh, yes," she said, "of course the Norths come, and sometimes Miss Wyman, but I was thinking of other people.

Though, after all, it *is* a little bit of a place, and there 's only this room, and Aunt Bab is always round. Well, it looked real pleasant to-night as I came in, that 's all, especially since Mr. North made the window box, and Mrs. North gave us those geraniums. And that bracket too. I don't see how he ever gets time to make such things ! I 'm going over there to-night, Jane. He wanted to sing, and he wants me to sing with some of the people at the church at a social they 're going to have there. He told me about it to-day. I 'd rather like to, though I would n't go for any-body else." Maddy was talking very fast. She seemed not to wish Jane to say any thing more on the subject of callers, and her sister followed her lead with eager delight.

"Why, Maddy," she said, "you don't know how glad I am! To think of you singing with the rest at such a place. Why, you don't know how happy it makes me! My little Maddy, it 's just like Mr. North to think of it — though of course, they need your voice, dear, and it 'll be doing good for you to go." The last sentence was added rather hastily, in response to a certain look which flashed into the beautiful face opposite, at the suggestion of kindness in the proposition.

“Of course they want me, or they would n’t ask me,” said Maddy. “It’s going to be in three weeks, and Mr. North will practice with me here at his mother’s, and then take me over to the church once or twice before the time, though he gets home so late that we can’t have the long rehearsals that the rest have. It’s a Song of the Echoes and a Fisherman’s Chorus. He showed me the music on the cars. This church is a hundred times nicer than the old one. I really shall rather enjoy going, I guess.”

“I’m so glad, dear,” was all little Jane could say. The feeling of gratitude in her heart to the Norths was deeper than ever when she thought of the church to which their neighbors had invited them when they first moved into the Square; a wide-awake, energetic church, with a pastor who made newcomers feel at home immediately; a band of young people who had even drawn from Maddy a half regret that she was too tired after her day’s work to attend their prayer-meetings; and more than one warm-hearted lady who had sought out the little dressmaker, promised her work, and talked to her about their benevolent undertakings in such a friendly way that Jane felt

“brought in” for the first time in her life, and was already secretly laying aside, bit by bit, the dollar which should constitute her a member of the missionary society. Nobody had thought of asking her for it.—the signs of “close living” were too evident in the cottage for that.—but Jane was all the happier over her small economies for knowing that nothing was demanded of her. She was already beginning to cherish inward hopes that in the new surroundings Maddy might come to care more for the things that were so dear to herself; and it was a pure delight, on those Sundays when Aunt Bab was either willing to be left alone, or able to go to church, to find herself sitting in the pew next the Norths, with Miss Wyman farther up the aisle, and other friendly faces in sight, here and there, her “child” beside her, and the very minister seeming to include them in his look when he came forward to open the service. When Jane could not go Maddy went with Mrs. North, and usually came home in good spirits, as she always did after a visit at No. 15. Jane could not be thankful enough for her neighbors and their influence on her sister. This feeling was so strong within her to-night, in view of the new step which

had been taken in “drawing in” Maddy among the church people, that she almost forgot to listen to the girl’s words as Maddy talked on, until she was recalled to herself by a question.

“What do you think, Jane?” she was saying. “Why don’t you answer? You know I ought to look nice, and I should think I might just as well get a real nice dress this time, should n’t you?”

“Why, yes, dear,” said Jane, smiling with indulgent fondness, “of course. You ’ll have your salary next week, and you can afford to get one. I must be thinking about fixing myself up pretty soon, too, but that does n’t matter to-night. Shall I go in town to-morrow and get you some samples? I can make it next week as well as not.”

But Maddy preferred to do her own shopping, and said something about running out at noon-time to visit the stores. With regard to the making of the dress she said nothing at all, only turned away with an odd expression of countenance which Jane did not understand. And then Aunt Bab called for help about the supper-table, and Maddy ran up-stairs to brush her hair and put on a fresh collar.

Jane would have liked to go over to the next door, too, that evening; but Aunt Bab was in one of her melancholy moods, and had to be helped to bed early. Her niece left the lamp on the table beside her, set near it a plate of white grapes which Miss Wyman had sent in that morning,—Miss Wyman was so kind to Aunt Bab in such ways,—and then went down-stairs to sit by the window. She drew the curtain and looked out into the moon-lighted street, watching the shadows of the trees as they swayed in the rising wind. A light snow had fallen that afternoon and lay like frostwork over the ground. There were footprints plainly to be seen leading out of the gate; Maddy's footprints. Some one else had passed not long before, too, as Jane noticed idly, following the marks with her eyes. They were the footprints of a man; and as she traced them in the white light, she saw their owner standing just beyond, before the bay-window of No. 15. The moonlight fell full on his face—a boyish, somewhat handsome face, with thin lips that were set in a rather disagreeable expression just now. Whoever the young man was, he was watching the doings in Mrs. North's parlor, look-

ing through the leafy screen of plants, and apparently not quite contented in his mind, though he smiled rather triumphantly as he gazed. Could he be watching Maddy? Jane thought with some indignation. What right had anybody to stand in the street and stare in at her little sister? She knew just how lovely the girl must look, standing beside Mrs. North at the piano, and "trying over" one of the songs already learned, before David should come in. The little dressmaker was quite martial in her mood, and would have liked to sally out into the street to request the impertinent spectator to go away and leave the inmates of Mrs. North's parlor to themselves. She was relieved after a few minutes to hear Mr. North's footsteps and to see the stranger walk on hurriedly and turn the corner, as if he were anxious to keep out of sight. The relief was plainly to be seen in her face, making brighter the smile with which she greeted her neighbor, who stopped as he caught sight of her face against the pane, and came up to the window to say good-evening.

"Can't you come over to-night?" he said, as Jane raised the sash a little and reached out to shake hands. "We want a critical audience,

Miss Maddy and I. Did she tell you of our new undertaking?"

"Oh, yes!" said Jane, with pleased eyes; "she was quite excited about it when she came in. Mr. North, you don't know how good it is to have Maddy brought into anything like that! She 's always had such a shut-up sort of life. It was so good of you to think of it. Maddy 's never been happy in church before."

"I 'm so glad that you are both happy in ours," said David, smiling. "Yes, I was glad that this should come up just now. I think it will be just the best way for your sister to grow well acquainted with our people, and for you too. You must be sure to be there and tell us how we all succeed. Don't you go to getting any work that will keep you that evening, or I shall bribe mother to disable your sewing-machine. You ought not to do so much, Miss Jane. Are you working to-night, that you are n't over at mother's? Or, no, you were sitting in the moon-light. Come, put on your shawl and run across with me now, won't you?"

But Jane shook her head. "I must n't leave Aunt Bab alone," she said. "I shall sit here and

listen, and perhaps some other evening I can come over too. Oh, yes! of course I shall manage to go and hear Maddy and you. It 's a treat just to think about it!"

"I suppose I must n't keep you in the cold," said Mr. North, looking a little troubled as he spoke; "but are n't you lonely? Do we keep Miss Maddy away too much? It is such a pleasure to my mother to have her there; and to myself too," he added, holding out his hand to say good-night.

"No, I 'm never lonely," said Jane, with her gentle little smile. "These nights are so beautiful, with the moon and all, and it 's restful and lovely to sit and listen to you singing there. Do you know, I was glad when I saw you coming, for there was some one standing in front of your house looking in so long that I was growing quite angry with him. One sees all sorts of sights when one looks out at night."

"Well, I 'll see that nobody bothers you in that way again to-night," laughed David. "I 'll parade myself in front of the window at intervals, and make myself as terrible looking as I can. You must n't be nervous. Oh, by the way," he

went on, putting his hand inside his coat, as Jane started to close the window, "there 's mother's rose that I carried off with me this morning. It 's gone about in the cars all day, but it 's fresh yet, and such a beauty that I shall just leave it to keep you company. Mother's roses are a sort of talisman to me, and they ought to bring pleasant thoughts to anybody — though I 'm sure you don't need talismans of that sort, Miss Jane. Good-night." He took off his hat as he spoke and turned away, going up the steps of No. 15, and calling out good-night again as his mother opened the door.

Jane sat with a face quite lighted up with pleasure after he had left her. It was so kind of Mr. North to think about her. Almost anybody would just be taken up with Maddy. She touched the rose with tender fingers as it lay on the sill, and looked down into its folded pink heart as if she would have asked it all that it had seen during the day. David North's roses could tell strange stories sometimes, she was sure; stories of so many different people helped or cheered by the one who wore them, that it was quite beautiful to think about, in the opinion of little Jane

Dunbar. Yes, it was a talisman, that bit of grace and beauty dropped on her window-sill this frosty night, and Jane sat smiling for a long time, with the flower in her lap. It had vanished when Maddy came in; but the elder sister's face was so sweet and happy as she discussed the question of the new gown and listened to Maddy's story of the evening, that the girl looked at her with a touch of surprise. It was odd that Jane should find so much to enjoy in life. Maddy thought that nothing could be duller than such an existence. It was strange, too, she thought, that there should be such a difference in her own way of living, which was so much like Jane's on one side, and on the other — so far apart.

CHAPTER VII.

A SPOILED WALK.

“Follow, follow,
Through the caverns hollow!””

HUMMED Maddy, and then caught herself up with a sudden amused consciousness that she was singing in the street. She glanced about her involuntarily to see if anybody had heard the sound. It was a quiet place, lined with the most respectable of houses, where the dimly lighted halls and the brighter windows in basement or wing gave a general impression that everybody was at tea. Nobody was in sight but a solitary policeman; and Maddy gathered her brown paper parcel closer in her arm, and walked on with some increase of dignity for the momentary forgetfulness. It was rather a large parcel for her to be carrying. The girl was usually somewhat particular with regard to such things, but people who lived in the suburbs might have some allowance made for them; and she comforted herself with a vague feeling that somehow or

other she looked "as if she had been in the city." Besides, it was quite dark, and she knew no one in the street leading to Barton Square.

"I don't care if it is big, I 'm glad I brought it," said Maddy exultantly. "I never had such a pretty dress in my life. Dear me! I 'm in such a hurry to see it finished."

Some one was coming up the street behind her, walking with quick steps that seemed hastening to overtake her. The girl started and half stopped as she heard them, and then walked on a little faster. Of course nobody could be following her, she reflected—and yet the steps did sound strangely familiar. She had listened to footsteps like them every day for the last few months; impatient, hurrying footsteps that went bounding up and down the stairs outside Mr. Kean's room, as if they had no time to spare on the way to and from that little office in the topmost story of the same building. They were gaining on her very fast now.

"Oh, dear me!" thought the girl. "If it is he, how on earth did he get here, when he said he should be away till to-morrow? and what will he think when he sees this bundle?"

She would have liked to turn and make sure that it was only a stranger; but Jane's warnings were too well impressed upon her mind for that, and she hurried on without a glance; though her breath was drawn more quickly, as her pursuer came close to her. In another moment there was a little laugh beside her, and a hand came over her shoulder, taking the bundle from her own with a promptness that admitted of no resistance.

"What on earth are you running away from me so for, Maidie?" said a gay voice. "You need n't pretend that you did n't know who it was. And, my dear girl, what possessed you to carry such a package home with you?"

Madeline turned a glowing, smiling face toward the newcomer, as he tucked her hand into his arm and walked on beside her. The girl was quite brilliant looking in her sudden delight. As the two passed the policeman, he stopped and looked after them with kindly interest.

"Good luck go with 'em," he muttered, being a man of sentiment who had been "in love" himself.

"How could I know it was you?" cried Maddy joyously. "And how did you know it

was I, Mr. Carling? I thought you were going to stay at the college for a week, to attend those lectures? You were n't at the office to-day, were you? I did n't hear you. And did you come out in the car with me?"

"How can I tell you if you talk so fast, Maidie?" said the young man, laughing again. "What a little chattering you are when one gets you alone, and how silent you used to be in those days when I was watching my chance to get acquainted! No; I did n't come on the cars. I came in from the college on the train that met yours, and chased you from the station, till I 'm all out of breath. I did n't dare hurry after you till I 'd come out of Main Street, you know, and you walked so uncommonly fast this evening. You go like a streak when that inconvenient little sister of yours is with you, but you distanced lightning this evening. Come, walk slower now, that 's a good girl, for I want to talk."

"But when did you ever see me with Jane?" asked Maddy, mystified. "And did you come in on purpose?"

"Yes, of course I did," responded Mr. Carling promptly. "I wanted to walk up with you.

And as for the little sister, have n't I been watching a chance to astonish you this way for three or four nights past, and seen you marched off before my face in the most exasperating manner? She 's a meek-looking little dragon, Miss Jane; but she is one, and no mistake."

Maddy laughed a little nervous, half-guilty laugh. "You must n't laugh at Jane," she cried. "I sha'n't let you. She 's twice as good as I am."

"Oh, very likely!" said her companion carelessly. "I never supposed that goodness was your special forte, though you 're plenty good enough for me, you know. If goodness consists in looking after you, I wish your sister was n't quite so good herself."

"Oh, dear me! you must n't talk so," said Maddy. "But I 'm glad to see you, of course. Did you want to talk to me for anything special, Mr. Carling? for there are only two blocks more to where I turn off."

"Off to the little square with the fountain in the middle, and the little cottage and the house with the roses, where you sing," said the young man meditatively, enjoying the surprise on the

beautiful face beside him. "I can tell you it 's cold outside in the street, Maidie! and there never was anything more tantalizing than to see you in there with that old lady and David North, and to stand in the freezing wintry night and gaze on your splendor from afar. That first night, when I followed you all the way without speaking, just for the fun of it, and these two or three nights when I came by to catch a glimpse of you, were the most aggravating ones of my life." He laughed out again as he spoke, a ringing, careless laugh.

"What do you mean?" said Maddy with a startled look. "Mr. Carling, did you really watch outside?"

"Oh, you need n't try to make me think you are n't pleased about it," he answered lightly. "Maidie, Maidie, you know you 're as pleased as can be that I hunted you up, though you did keep on saying good-by at street corners so long. I wonder I never went after you so before; but I rather enjoyed holding off a little till I was sure you 'd like it. Yes, I watched you, you may be sure, and said, 'Beauty clear and fair,' all over to myself outside. Really, Maidie, you have a very

sweet little voice, and I 'd like to sing with you myself. We 'll try that same duet some time, won't we?— and I 'll take all the wind out of David North's sails."

Maddy only answered by a little blushing smile.

"I could give him one or two hints, if he only knew it," continued Mr. Carling with a slight upward fling of his head. "He is n't much of a singer, and you need n't think so, Miss Dunbar. He almost drowned you out when you sang together. You never told me you sang before. You ought to have some training, Maidie."

"Mr. North tells me things," said Maddy, the pretty color coming and going in her cheeks. "It 's quite like a lesson, practicing with him."

Her companion shrugged his shoulders, frowning a little.

"He need n't be teaching you *too* much," he said. "What you want is some regular hints, you know. I wonder if he ever took a lesson. I had lessons myself for a few months in college, but *I* should n't set up for a teacher. I 'll tell you, Maidie, if you just went to hear some fine opera it would do you more good than all the

teaching that North could give you in a year. Will you go sometime with me? I declare I should just like to take you for the first time. In two weeks the Milan Company will be here. Maidie, will you go?"

Maddy stopped short in startled surprise. She looked half frightened, though her eyes flashed with delight at the question.

"Go—with you—to the opera?" she cried.
"Oh, Mr. Carling!"

"Yes, yes, you must!" said the young man eagerly, yet with a little hint of patronizing superiority in his tone. "Of course you must. You poor girl, you 've never had a chance to see anything. I 'd give sums of money to see your face when listening to 'Trovatore' or 'Lucia.' It will be the greatest lark I 've had for a year."

"But I can't, oh, I can't!" cried Maddy, recovering herself. "Why, what would Jane say? She 'd never let me go in the world."

"You are n't obliged to do just as your sister says, I suppose, always," said Mr. Carling, frowning again. "Why, Maidie, any one would think you were a child. There 's no harm in it. I would n't take you to anything out of the way."

Don't you suppose I know what's the right thing, you silly girl?"

"Yes, oh, yes," faltered the girl; "but you know I could n't. Oh, how I should like it! But I never could tell Jane anything about it, for she'd think I'd been telling her stories, and she'd never get over it. Why, you know she thinks you're an old gentleman that takes an interest in me."

The two looked at each other with a little laugh of understanding.

"Yes, I know, you clever little thing," said the young man; "but then, you know you did n't really tell her so, and if she chooses to take things for granted you can't help it. See here, Madeline, you can just go without telling her anything until afterward. We can arrange it somehow. You are n't going to be kept out of the world this way any longer, if I can help it. Your sister must think you're a baby, to keep you under so!"

"Oh, there she is now!" cried Maddy in a startled tone as he spoke. "Look, coming out of the Square to meet me. Oh, Mr. Carling, do give me my bundle! Don't let her see you till

I can tell her something. She 'll always think I 've been telling her what is n't true. Oh, do let me go!"

But the young man kept her hand on his arm, laying his own upon it and holding it fast. I sha'n't let you go," he whispered. "She does n't see us yet. Here, come around the corner with me. It won't hurt her to go on a little. I want you to go to walk with me. I 'll see you home all right before she can get back. Maidie, you silly child, don't be so excited. What earthly harm can there be in walking around this block to talk over what we were saying? Besides, you have n't told me anything about that church affair that you spoke of the other day — when it 's going to be, and how I 'm to get there; for I'm going, if only for the fun of it."

Maddy was trembling as she found herself swept away from sight of the little lonely figure coming quickly up the street. She was excited, half angry, and half pleased at being taken possession of in this summary manner. It was some minutes before she could join in the laughter with which Mr. Carling pictured the shy little "dragon's" wonder when she should come home

and find her sister waiting for her. The one block had extended into two before she had come to herself sufficiently to talk over the plans which Mr. Carling had to propose. Even when he left her at the gate of the cottage, after carefully reconnoitering for signs of the returning sister, she had not given her consent to plunge into the forbidden pleasure which was set before her.

"I can't promise anything about it," she said half impatiently. "You must let me think. There 'll be such a fuss if I go. You must wait till you see me again; and oh, please don't watch for me this way, or Mr. North will be noticing, and likely as not speak to Jane about it, and then there 'll be a pretty time!"

And Mr. Carling, muttering something very like an objurgation of both Jane and the benevolent conductor, was obliged to withdraw in something of a bad humor.

Maddy's eyes were like stars as she let herself in and went to put off her wraps, hurrying a little, so as to get back to the parlor before her sister should come in. It would have been difficult to say whether her excitement were pleasant or the contrary. Whichever it might be, the

outward effect of it was to produce an irritated feeling toward all the surroundings of the cottage, from Aunt Bab nodding over the fire, to the gray cat that came to meet her as she went into the room. Maddy would have liked to rush away from it all; to shut herself up in her own room; or, better still, to walk and walk in the clear, frosty air outside, with some one to talk to her, and no one to break in on the conversation at its most interesting stage.

"It 's enough to make a saint cross to be watched so," she said half aloud, as she untied her bundle and opened the folds of shining blue silk which it contained. "Mr. Carling 's right about that, anyhow. Jane ought to let me alone more, now I 'm old enough to look after myself. What did she want to go traipsing out this evening for, when she knew I must be half way home? I don't care if she is worried. It just spoiled our walk, and made us almost quarrel. Maybe he 'll never say anything about going again; but of course, I ought n't to go if he does. I don't see why in the world I never can have things like other girls!"

CHAPTER VIII.

THE NEW DRESS.

THERE was the sound of a trembling hand at the door,—a hand that seemed a long time, somehow, in putting the key to the lock. Maddy looked up at the noise with a little pout. She had no desire to stir to let her sister in, and she did not speak as Jane entered the room. But the next minute she had uttered a little cry, for her sister's face was so white and wild that a sudden pang shot to the heart of the thoughtless girl. Jane sank into the first chair at hand, as she caught sight of her, and burst into a storm of crying, so surprising a thing that Aunt Bab sprang up in shocked surprise, and Maddy dropped her bundle and ran to her sister's side.

“For pity's sake, Jane, what 's the matter?” cried Aunt Bab. “Is somebody dead, or did you lose your pocket-book?”

“What is it, Jane?” said Maddy. “Were you frightened? Why, Jane, don't! You are n't sick, are you?”

Jane shook her head with a mighty effort at self-control. She put out one hand and drew her sister down on her lap, holding her close, and sobbing and laughing together.

“I’m just a goose!” she cried. “O Maddy! where were you? I’ve been clear down to the station to meet you, and could n’t see you anywhere, and I was so frightened that it seemed as if I should drop in the street! O Maddy, Maddy, if anything had happened to you!”

“For mercy’s sake!” said Maddy. “Why, Jane Dunbar, what a girl! How on earth could anything happen to me so early in the evening, in this quiet place? There! don’t cry, I’m all right, you can see. Here! don’t try to hold me so. The idea of my sitting in your lap, when I’m half a head taller than you are!” She kissed her sister half carelessly, half penitently, as she drew herself away and went to sit by the table. “I went home by another street,” she said with studied *nonchalance*: “I wanted a little longer walk. You really ought to learn not to worry so, Jane, as if I was n’t old enough to take care of myself! I wish you would n’t try to come to meet me at all, and then there would n’t be any

danger of your scaring yourself into hysterics. Come, do let 's have tea, and then you 'll feel better. Now, Aunt Bab, don 't you get to crying too, or I shall give up."

"I feel to sympathize with you, Jane," said the old lady impressively, drawing out her handkerchief. "You can come and pour your sorrows into my bosom if you want to. I ain 't like Maddy. Only you must n 't cry on my blue bow, for the color will run in streaks."

"And you must n 't cry when you go past the table, or you 'll spot my new dress," said Maddy with a mischievous laugh. "O Janey, do stop and come and see it. I did n 't mean to frighten you, really."

Jane got up and came over to the table, brushing off the last tears with an effort at a smile.

"Of course I 'm silly," she said. "But you know I 've always felt responsible for you, Maddy, ever since mother showed you to me when she was dying, and said, 'You must give her my name, Jane, and you must always take care of her for me.' I kept feeling as if I could hear mother's voice saying it, all the way home, after I was sure you were n 't anywhere between

here and the station. But there! I 'll stop and not make you nervous. I believe there never was such another goose as I am in this world. Now, where is the dress?"

Maddy held up the lustrous silk with some pride. "Is n't it beautiful? And did n't I do well picking it out? I can choose a silk just as well as you can, I know. I brought it home myself, so that it would get here to-night, for I must see about having it made to-morrow."

Jane handled and admired dutifully, though she was a little pale still. She held the material up to Maddy's shoulders, and pronounced it the most becoming shade that she could have chosen.

It was pretty to see the pleasure of the girl as she discussed the purchase, and told of her adventures in the city when she ran out at noon to the store; how she had had it sent to the office, and how Mr. North had laughed at her for carrying it so carefully and refusing to let him put it in the rack in the car.

"I told him it was a new dress," she said gayly; "and he said he hoped he should see me in it; and when I said it was blue, he said that was his favorite color. I sha'n't be ashamed to sing with those people now."

"Oh, you 'll look like a picture!" said the admiring sister. "Come to tea, dear, please, now, and we 'll talk about the making of it afterward; and I 've got something else to talk over, too, when we get that settled."

Maddy had evidently quite forgotten her sister's fright when the two sat down in the parlor, after Aunt Bab had gone to bed.

If Jane were a little more affectionate than usual, that was nothing extraordinary, and Maddy had too much on her mind to notice much outside of herself. She looked a little uneasy as Jane began to bring out fashion-books and ask questions about the making up of the silk, but she glanced at one or two pictures before laying them down and pushing back her chair.

"What was it you were going to tell me?" she asked abruptly. "We need n't look at these now. They 're all common-looking anyhow. I want this made not just like everybody else's. You may as well unburden yourself first. Has Aunt Bab been doing anything dreadful?"

"Oh, no, dear!" said Jane brightly, "Aunt Bab is quite happy nowadays. I suppose it 's because Mrs. North and Miss Wyman are so nice

to her, and she sees some one besides you and me now and then. Miss Wyman took her to ride this morning; and it did her so much good, though she did keep saying, ‘Man is born to trouble,’ when she came back, because of getting her feet cold. No, it was myself. I wanted some advice.”

Jane looked very bright as she spoke; a little color had come back to her face, and she seemed eager and happy. She took a little worn account-book that lay beside her and opened it before Maddy.

“You see, it was what I’m going to do for a dress,” she went on. “I did think that I’d make this do till spring; but, after all, dear, you know I have n’t had a new dress for three years, and somehow I’d like to look nice just now. I seem to see more people, you know; and then I would n’t want to look too shabby beside you at that social. I never seemed to notice that my black dress was getting so rusty. And I’ve just figured and calculated and gone over it the last two or three days, till it seemed as if there was never any end to the counting up, and I could n’t see any way to get it at all, — with Aunt Bab need-

ing medicine and the doctor now and then, and little extras, you know, and we did make such a hole in the savings-bank money when we moved, — and so I 'm just going to come to you, dear, for the first time, and get you to help me out. If you could lend me ten dollars, Maddy, I could get such a pretty dress, and I was thinking perhaps I would n't get black this time. I 'm not really so old, you know, and I think I should enjoy wearing brown for a change, or perhaps blue. And then I 'd pay it back next summer. I could have it then, I know. Is n't it nice that I can make our things, Maddy, and save dress-maker's bills? You could n't have had half such a nice dress if I had n't been going to make it, and I could n't have had any at all, if I had n't been able to do the work and borrow of my little sister to get the goods."

Jane reached across the table to pat the girl's hand as she finished. She was smiling a little, looking down at Maddy's silk, but she looked up with a sudden change of countenance as the answer came. Maddy looked positively vexed.

"I 'm sure I don't see why I could n't get just as handsome a dress as I chose, anyhow," she said,

answering the latter part of Jane's speech, "if I have money to pay for it. I don't see why you did n't tell me before, Jane."

"Why, dear?" asked Jane wonderingly. "I never thought of it till to-day. Was there something else you wanted to do with the money?"

Maddy went to the fireside and stood warming her hands a moment before she replied. She was pouting visibly, and seemed somehow to find it hard to frame an answer.

"Well, yes, I did," she said at last. "If you 'd only told me, Jane, I would n't have got my mind made up, but I 've gone and spoken to Miss Wilton now, and I don't see how I can change. And it will take every cent of my money, except just a little that I shall have to use for gloves and so on. Why on earth did n't you tell me before, instead of saying you were all fixed for the winter?"

Jane sat quite still, with all the pleasant light dying out of her face. The color began to grow deeper in her cheeks, but it was not from happiness. "What do you mean, Maddy?" she said in an odd voice. "To Miss Wilton? Do you mean that you are n't going to want me to make your dress at all?"

“Oh, dear me!” said Maddy uneasily. “I wish you would n’t speak in that tone. I did n’t suppose you ’d care, Jane, and I never thought of your wanting the money. I just wanted this dress to be real stylish, because it was the only really nice one I ever had, and I thought—you know you ’re always saying that you wish you had new ideas—I should think it might be a good thing for you to have one done out of the house now and then, and Miss Wilton does make such elegant looking things. But if I ’d known you wanted one yourself, I would have got along.”

“As I shall get along,” said Jane, with a little lifting of her head. “Well, never mind. It ’s your own money, and of course you can do as you please, only I ’m sorry that my work is n’t”—the little woman stopped suddenly, with tears rolling down her cheeks. She turned to the window and pretended to be busy with the plants that stood there. Maddy heard an unmistakable smothered sob in the silence that followed.

“You always have enough to do, anyhow, and you ’d just work nights to get it done,” she said. “Why, I ’m sure I never meant to hurt your

feelings, Jane. I 've been to be measured already, though, and I was going to leave the goods tomorrow noon. I don't see what to do."

"There *is n't* anything to do," said Jane, turning back with a resolute smile. "Never mind! It can't be helped; and I dare say it was all foolishness, my wanting anything; and I need *n't* have bothered you about it. Very likely, as you say, I shall get some new ideas. You need *n't* mind, Maddy."

"I 'm sure you look quite nice on Sundays," said Maddy hesitatingly. "I was thinking the other day that you looked better than I ever saw you."

Jane did not answer. She only went over and gathered up her fashion-books. Her hands trembled a little as she carried them to the side-table.

"And you know you could *n't* go to the social because of Aunt Bab," went on the girl, still more uneasily. "She 'd never be able to go, Jane."

"Mrs. North was going to let Bridget come over and sit in the house," said Jane. "We talked it over this afternoon. She knew I 'd

want to go to hear you. But of course it does n't matter particularly. It is n't as if I was likely to be missed. I should n't feel fit to go with Mr. North and wear my old gown, when you are so nicely dressed. It 's better for me to stay at home, and I shall." There was something in her sister's voice that Maddy had never heard there before; almost, even, a little bitterness. The girl looked at her with a fretful feeling of dissatisfaction.

"I don't see why you will talk as if I was so perfectly horrid," she said with a little flash of anger. "I 'd rather have you say things out at once and be done with it. Why under the sun you did n't make up your mind sooner, I don't see! Well, I 'm sure I did n't think of hurting your feelings, or keeping you out of a dress, and I shall feel uncomfortable all winter. It just spoils all my pleasure, and I think it 's a shame!" There were tears in her eyes as she spoke; tears of anger, half with herself and half with Jane. The elder sister came over and kissed her as she saw them.

"Never mind, dear," she said, more in her usual manner. "Of course you could n't know,

and I shall do very well. I 'm sorry if I made you feel bad, but I was a little disappointed. Don't worry about it."

"I won't if you don't," returned Maddy, brightening. "And, anyhow, Jane, I don't believe it would be very pleasant at the church, and you 'll hear the songs, you know, here."

Jane nodded, busying herself over the plants again.

"And, after all, it would be a bother to Mrs. North to have Bridget come over, and leave their own house alone," went on the girl. "How you 'd feel if anything happened over there that evening! And then Aunt Bab might be sick; and anyhow it would be quite overwhelming Mr. North, would n't it? with three of us to look after. You won't mind, then, Janey? And you don't care about my taking my dress to Miss Wilton? Of course I would n't do it often"—

Jane only looked up and smiled rather tremulously, but Maddy was quite herself again and did not notice.

"I 'm going up-stairs," she said. "I want to read where it 's still. You would n't care anything about this last book, Jane, or I 'd read it to you. Good-night."

“Good-night,” said the other gently, still bending over the window-box.

She sat down close to it after Maddy had gone, touching one plant after another with her trembling fingers. The leaves were quite wet when she lifted her head.

“How silly I was,” she murmured, and then burst into a sudden fit of weeping, with her face buried in her hands. It was only for a moment, however. “I’m worse than a baby,” she cried indignantly, and then rose resolutely, turned up the lamp, and took up a little clasped Bible which lay on her work-table. “I must just forget it all,” she said, and opened it to where a withered rose lay between the pages at the Fourteenth Chapter of St. John.

Maddy, lying on her bed with a German romance before her, was thinking within herself, “Poor Jane, I’m sorry; but I don’t see what earthly difference it makes to her just now, and it makes so much to me! I wonder if it is wicked to be just a little glad that she is n’t going, so that there won’t be any danger of her running across Mr. Carling — if he really is there!”

CHAPTER IX.

THE TWO STAY-AT-HOMES.

YOU and I ought to have gone too," moaned Aunt Bab, applying her second clean handkerchief to her eyes. "O Jane! few and evil have been the days of my pilgrimage; and I was always left out of things from the time Jonathan took up with Mirandy Sparks to the day Mr. North invited Maddy to sing and did n't ask either of us; and Miss Wyman asked you over to help get ready for her party and left me to stay home with Maddy, which is next to staying home with a weathercock, for she don't point one way more than an hour at a time these days, and makes one long for a lodge in a garden of cucumbers, though it might lead to indigestion, and I 'm sure I don't care if it would."

Aunt Bab, having delivered herself of this harangue, leaned back in her chair and wept unrestrainedly.

"O Aunty!" said patient Jane, with a despair-

ing smile, "please don't go on so. Don't you know Mr. and Mrs. North did want us both to go, only you are n't well enough to walk so far, and I did n't have anything to wear, and would n't leave you alone, anyhow? Don't you mind staying in. It 's a lovely night, and we 'll put out the lamp and sit in the moonlight, just as you like to do, and you shall tell me all about Jonathan Green and anything else you like to talk about, and I 'll sing to you, and we 'll pretend we did n't want to go at all. It 's cold outside, anyhow, and we 're warm as toast here. And as for Miss Wyman, you know it was only because her Lizzy, that almost keeps house for her, is sick, that she asked me to come over to-morrow; and I was so glad to do anything neighborly for her, when she is so good to me. Mrs. North invited you in to spend the afternoon with her, you know, and Maddy 'll be here at tea-time. I would n't have stayed in the evening, only Miss Wyman said it would be such a help to have some one just oversee the servants, because of its being so hard for her to get about; and it 's the only chance I 've had to do the least thing for her, and I thought it was so nice and friendly to

ask me, just as if I was a real friend that she could turn to."

"Well, Miss Wyman means well," responded the old lady, with a slight cessation of grief. "And I always could forgive my enemies, Jane, not meaning Miss Wyman, who ain't one and never was. Besides, she did say she 'd send me over some ice-cream, me and Maddy, and some salad; and I asked her to see that they put it on a bigger tray than the last time, when one spilled into the other, because of the boy stopping in the Square. But that ain't Maddy. Maddy tries my feelings. She ain't got no more sympathy than a popinjay, and that 's what makes me feel bad to stay home. It ain't that I care a snap about going, but I don't think she ought to go flourishing round like a green bay-tree, and not drop a tear for them she leaves behind her, only she ain't got on green, but blue, which is all one by gas-light."

"But Maddy looked very pretty," said Jane, with an attempt to turn her aunt's thoughts into another channel. "She looked like a princess almost, I thought, though her dress was n't fussy a bit, either. I wish I could give such a stylish

look to things I make. I could n't see the least reason for her taking it back to the dressmaker's to-morrow to have that looping changed, but Maddy always was particular. It is n't any wonder that she wanted some one else to make it, I suppose. It does have a different air, and she never had anything half so pretty before. Maddy ought to be rich, so as to wear pretty things all the time."

"She takes after all the Dunbars," said Aunt Bab, with a touch of family pride, regardless of the fact that the younger sister had always been noted for her lack of resemblance to her father's side of the family, while plain little Jane was a miniature likeness of him. "The Dunbars were always a good-looking set, though some of us were better looking than others. *You* never had much to brag of, Jane, but that ain't your fault. Handsome is that handsome does," with which ambiguous compliment the old lady dried her eyes, sat upright, and looked ready for sociability.

"And did n't Mrs. North look pretty in her black satin?" went on the younger woman, glad to continue the subject of dress if it produced tranquillity. "They were a nice looking com-

pany, were n't they, Aunt Bab? It was nice that Mr. North could get off for the whole evening. I don't think anybody will have a handsomer young lady to take than he has."

"Fine looking couple," pronounced Aunt Bab judicially. "I don't know as they could either of 'em do better, though there 's a time to sing and a time to weep, and marry in haste and repent at leisure."

Jane got up hastily and lowered the light, standing a moment at the window as she drew the curtain and let in a flood of moonlight. She was angry with herself at the little thrill of pain which came with her aunt's random words. Why should she feel a choking in her throat at the memory of the two figures which had stood together in the same room a little while before; the kind-faced, stalwart conductor, with his look of genuine disappointment at finding that no one was to go from the cottage but Maddy; and the graceful girl with that flower-like face rising above the dark blue gown like a rosy lily from a pool of shadowed water. They *were* a fine looking couple, and Jane had an inward feeling that they never looked better than when standing

together so. Mr. North had smiled at Maddy as if he was quite proud to be with her, and the girl had looked so bright and eager, with her lovely, flitting color and her dimpling smile. Jane wondered if they had either of them thought of her since they started. She was grateful to Mrs. North for stopping to kiss her a second time as she said good-by. It was pleasant to be remembered. Mrs. North understood her foolish little feeling of disappointment at being left behind, she was sure. As for the others—how should they guess? Doubtless they were only thinking of each other, and neither one could find a pleasanter subject of meditation, thought the loving woman, sitting down to weave her own chain of fancies while her aunt talked on about the vanished youth which had grown beautiful the farther it was left behind.

Jane had been full of wondering anxiety about her little sister for the last few days. Maddy had never been so wayward before. It was as Aunt Bab had said, "One never knows which way she will point." Sometimes she would come in gay and running over with fun and life; and at other times, more particularly on those evenings when

Jane's work did not prevent her from going to the station at six o'clock, she was silent and almost morose. Sometimes she was affectionate in a remorseful sort of way which brought tears to the eyes of the forbearing sister, and again she seemed ready to suspect Jane of trying to rule her, and to resent anything in the least like interference with her wishes. Once she burst into tears and shut herself up in her room for the whole evening, when she had come in a little early and found Jane sponging and pressing the old black cashmere, in a vain effort at renovation; and several times the watchful elder had noticed that Maddy's light remained burning long after her own was out and the house was still. Jane was very patient with the willful child. There was a great pity in her soul as she watched over the restless young heart she loved so much, and that seemed so unconscious that any one saw that it was restless. Maddy was evidently going through some crisis which she chose to hide from all about her, and Jane thought she understood her. Poor little Maddy! One could excuse anything to such a child with *that* on her mind. Jane bore the sharp words and impatient ways in silence,

and watched for a chance to help, with an inward tender feeling, that "it would all come out right," and that she should see her little sister happy, safe, and sheltered soon. It must be so. How could any one help loving the bright, impulsive girl, who was attractive even in her "moods"? and how should Maddy herself keep her fluttering young heart at home when such a strong, safe nest seemed ready for it, close by? Strong and safe! Jane told herself that it would be a happy day for her when Maddy's life should pass into that wiser keeper, and she tried valiantly to reason away the inexplicable feeling of loneliness that would come over her at the thought.

On the night before this evening, it had seemed to her that she heard a faint sound of sobbing from Maddy's room, and for once the longing desire to help her sister had been too strong for her. Jane had opened the door and gone softly in, sitting down on the side of the bed and laying a gentle hand on Maddy's head before the girl heard her enter. Maddy had looked up half angrily, with the tears glittering on her lashes, in the streaming moonlight; but the sight of the loving face bent over her had seemed to quiet

her, somehow. She laid her head on the pillow again with a little laugh.

“There is n’t anything the matter with me,” she said. “I was tired and could n’t go to sleep. Don’t stay, Jane, or Aunt Bab will wake up and come poking in, and I can’t stand that.”

“Dear,” said Jane gravely and sweetly, “there ’s just one thing I want to say to you. I ’m not going to ask you any questions, but I can’t help seeing that there ’s something on your mind that you don’t want to talk about, and something, I ’m afraid, that you ’re worrying about, for fear it is n’t quite right. No, I ’m not asking you to tell me, for I think you ’d rather keep it to yourself, only I did want to tell you this. Maddy, darling, if—it ’s some one that you ’re thinking of, any friend that you can’t keep out of your mind, and don’t know quite whether you ought to let yourself think of so much—if it ’s that, dear, you must n’t feel angry with yourself, for there ’s nothing wrong in it. Only you must n’t let yourself be unhappy. Nobody need be really unhappy in this world, I think, for there ’s help to be had for every trouble, for the asking. And, dear, if loving our

friends makes us unhappy, we must just take all our loves to the Lord, and ask him to make them into the strong, happy kind that does n't think of self at all. That sort of love can't hurt anybody, and it 's sure to bring happiness in the end to the one that 's loved and the one that does the loving. Don't tell me whether it 's anything like that, that ails you, dear, but if it is, just ask God to teach you his own beautiful way of loving, and then take the comfort of it, and don't worry for fear you are n't doing right. Nothing that God blesses is wrong, and there 's nothing that he blesses as fully as the highest kind of love. He means it to be a joy to us, dear, and he 'll show us how to make it so, in the end, if we ask him, though some of us are very slow to learn."

Maddy had looked at her sister wonderingly as she talked. She had never heard Jane speak so before. It was odd, for the quiet little dress-maker could not possibly know what was going on in her sister's mind; but there was something sweet about it, too. Maddy reached up involuntarily and kissed the fair face above her. Jane looked almost pretty in the moonlight, with her soft hair falling about her shoulders. She seemed

younger, too, somehow. Her sister lay silent and serious a moment, and then laughed again, a little oddly.

"You 're a dear old thing, Jane," she said; "but I haven 't anything to tell, I 'm sure, and I don 't know what you mean. It does n't matter, though; I 'm just as much obliged. There! go back to bed, do, for Aunt Bab 's stirring. Kiss me again, Janey. You 're ever so good to me; but how on earth did you think of all that, and what under the sun do you know about that sort of thing?"

Jane had gone away rather sorrowfully. It was evident that Maddy did not enter into what she had said, though perhaps it might be only the child's way of "covering up" feeling. Jane thought about it in a puzzled way, again, this evening, while Aunt Bab's solemn voice rambled on, and the moonlight crept across the carpet toward the window.

"Just such a night as Jonathan and I had when we walked home from singing-school that night, and he said, 'I am monarch of all I survey,'" said Aunt Bab sentimentally. "He was a master hand to say poems, though I never walked home

with him but that once, so I did n't hear 'em much. Just such a night, only it was raining and muddy as a bog, and I lost my rubbers off, and he held the umbrella over his side, through getting interested in the verses, and dripped it all over my cherry-colored hat. Poor Jonathan! Jane, if you 'd ever been in love you could sympathize, but you ain't that kind, and I go my ways alone."

"I 'll try to sympathize though," said Jane, smiling with a guilty consciousness that her thoughts had been far away from the subject of conversation. "Now, dear, don't you want to go up to bed and let me sing you to sleep?"

But Aunt Bab preferred to stay where she was until Maddy should come in. Jane might sing if she liked, but must choose lively tunes. There was n't anybody sleepy that Aunt Bab knew of.

So Jane put her dreams and wonderings away, and devoted herself once more to the old lady's comfort; and two hours afterward, Mr. North, coming to the door with Maddy, heard a soft voice singing in the moonlight, and caught a glimpse of a gentle, fair face looking out into the silvery sky, with a sleeping figure in the chair beside it.

Jane came to the door to greet them, and stood talking a few moments, asking about the social, and congratulating them on the applause which Maddy gleefully announced had followed the chorus.

Jane looked very well in that soft light. It seemed to suit her somehow, as Maddy had said the night before. Mr. North looked from one sister to the other with an odd fancy that they might have been taken as the embodiment of sunshine and moonlight. He thought of the two faces long after he had said good-night and gone on to where his mother was waiting for him; but it was a curious fact that the last sound which floated through his memory as he dropped to sleep that night, was not an echo of the dashing chorus in which Maddy's voice had rung out so clearly, but of a soft voice singing alone in the moonlight: —

“ Flow gently, sweet Afton, among thy green braes ;
Flow gently, I 'll sing thee a song in thy praise.
My Mary 's asleep by thy murmuring stream;
Flow gently, sweet Afton, disturb not her dream.”

CHAPTER X.

A MUSICALE.

THERE was bustle and hurry at Miss Wyman's house across the Square, next day. The great parlors were swept and garnished. The fine, old, delicate china was carefully taken from cupboards and closets to be put in readiness for use; flowers were brought for the vases. One well-known figure in Barton Square, a handsome, elderly gentleman, whom Miss Wyman called Cousin Dick, and who spent almost every evening in her cozy library, stopped more than once during the day to see if he could "do anything to help." Amid the confusion and haste of ordering the house, Jane flitted about, enjoying to the full everything in the handsome old mansion, and quite reveling in the "pretty things" which she so seldom had a chance to handle. Miss Wyman smiled to herself in a pleased way as she saw the gladness in the face of her neighbor, and rejoiced in the happy inspiration which had led her to ask Jane's help in preparing for her musical party.

"If she only had a dress fit to wear, so that I could just bring her into the parlors to-night, instead of setting her down in the dining-room alcove to pretend 'oversee,' as if Robert and Esther needed any oversight," said the hostess to her cousin on one of his flying visits. "She 's a dear little thing, and I 'd like to keep her all the time for a companion if it was n't for that tomb-stone of an aunt; and it 's a burning shame that that handsome Maddy has n't as much consideration for her as a baby, and can't give poor Jane a chance to have a little pure pleasure once in a lifetime! As if David North would care for a rosy-cheeked chit like that! Though, to do Maddy justice, I don't believe she 's thinking of him any more than he is of her, in spite of Mrs. North's fears."

Cousin Dick smiled good-naturedly. "She does n't look particularly miserable, your little *protégée*," he said, watching Jane with some show of interest, as Cousin Dick generally watched anything pointed out to him by Clarissa.

"No; she never does, and that 's the exasperating part of it," said Miss Wyman with comical indignation. "She 'd go through life at the

mouth of a cannon and say it was ‘very interesting,’ or she ‘d live in the middle of the desert of Sahara and talk about how warm and comfortable the sand was to sit on! I suppose that people who spend their lives making the best of things *are* saints, but I really do think it ‘s more interesting to scold once in a while and take the comfort of being miserable!’”

“As you do!” returned the gentleman with fine sarcasm. “Well, I ‘m sorry for the young woman, but she ‘s lucky in her friends, if she is n’t in her family. You and Mrs. North would make up for a wilderness of sisters, I think.” Whereupon Miss Wyman laughed and remarked that it was too busy a day for compliments, and that Dick might as well go and come back in the evening.

Jane herself was utterly unconscious of any pity bestowed upon her. The whole busy day was a delightful change for the closely confined dressmaker; and when evening came, and she was seated behind the curtains in the quiet little alcove to watch the servants, see that nothing went wrong, and “keep an eye on things,” as Miss Wyman vaguely said, she was as happy as

a child when waiting for “the party to begin.” Miss Wyman came and sat beside her in the deep window-seat for a while, looking out across the array of little tables ready for carrying into the parlors, to where the rose-colored light fell softly on the books in the library, and the brighter lamps shone over the larger rooms across the hall.

“It’s a blessing to me to have you here,” said Miss Wyman; “you don’t know how pleasant it is to see you about the house! You must come oftener to see me, Jane. And now you won’t be lonely this evening? There won’t be much for you to do, and I’m afraid you’ll be all by yourself most of the time.”

“No, I sha’n’t be lonely, of course,” said Jane, straightening a fold in Miss Wyman’s gown. “It will be so pleasant to sit here and watch the people without being seen, and I shall enjoy the music so much.”

“I shall let Mrs. North know where to find you,” said the other, “and she will slip in, I know, for a little while. Mrs. North will not come generally, you know, but I persuaded her to be here to-night because of that boy soprano who is coming. I am so glad you will hear him, Jane.

Poor little fellow! I can sympathize with him, little crippled thing! It was a real providence that threw him in my way, and gave me a chance to start him with Professor Müller. The professor is quite wild over him, and it is a wonder the child's head is n't turned with all the notice taken of him. He 's a good child though, and it seems beautiful that he should be able to make his living in this way when there 's so little that he could do."

"It was beautiful that you found him," said little Jane with a loving look at the quaint figure beside her. "And it is beautiful that I can hear him. I am so glad I could be here." She smiled a good-by as the door-bell announced the arrival of the first guest, and settled herself in her corner to watch and enjoy.

That evening was one long to be remembered in Jane's experience. It was like a lovely dream to look out at the pleasant company that filled the parlors — bright-faced women and thoughtful men, with here and there a young and fair face like a spring flower in the midst of rich autumn fields. Miss Wyman's evening parties were conglomerate affairs, where rich and poor, "blue

bloods" and strangers of no family at all mingled in surprising combinations; some people called them "mixed-up" companies, and set down the giver as eccentric; but Miss Wyman's family was an old one, as was proved by her keeping up the old mansion in this unfashionable quarter of the city. The house was pleasant and old-fashioned, and the odd little hostess herself was so fascinating and unlike other people that everybody enjoyed an evening with her. Jane saw and felt the charm of her presence as she watched through the alcove curtains, inwardly taking notes for Maddy's benefit, and feeling as if she were looking at a charming picture-book. How bright and joyous Miss Wyman's face was! and what an impression she gave of careless comfort and entire freedom from care! It seemed wonderful, when one thought of the contrast between her and every other woman in the room. Jane would have dwelt on it longer if the music had not begun. It was while the wonderful boy singer was caroling like a song-bird some golden air that "took the heart" with listening, that a tall figure stole noiselessly into the dining-room, and went softly along the wall until it slipped into the alcove at Jane's side.

“Good-evening!” said David North under his breath, laughing all over his face at the surprise in Jane’s eyes. He sat down where Miss Wyman had been, and leaned against the casement with an air of intense relief.

“If you had any idea how good it is to get away,” he said softly, as the singing ended. “I don’t enjoy this sort of thing; and when Miss Wyman told me that you were here upholding the dignity of the supper room, I just made up my mind that I should come too, for a while at least. May I stay?”

“Of course,” said Jane, smiling over the little pink sock which she was knitting. “Only you must n’t talk loud, so that anybody else will come in. How pretty your mother looks to-night, and how pleasant it all is!”

“This is the pleasantest,” said David emphatically. “One wants to rest after flying about all day as I do. Sometimes there are sad enough things on the ears to upset one entirely for parties after one gets home. I should have liked to stay in to-night, but I would n’t tell mother so, of course, though I must get her to see that poor woman to-morrow.” He spoke thoughtfully and

rather sadly, and his face was full of a sort of brooding pity as he stopped talking to listen to the next song.

“Did anything sad happen to-day?” asked Jane, when it was over.

“Yes; so sad that I can’t quite get it out of my mind. It was this afternoon, on the last train before dark. There was a poor woman in black, with a little rusty crape about her dress, and such a thin, white face, who got in at Collegetown and was going to the city. She had a little child with her, a regular gypsy of a boy, about five years old, such a contrast to his poor mother! I noticed him first from his catching at my coat and asking me to let him smell of my rose. He was jumping up and down, leaning over the seat, and dancing in the aisle every other minute; a rosy, dark little fellow, with eyes that were browner and brighter than anybody’s I ever saw, unless it is your sister Maddy’s. His mother called him Teddy. Poor thing! I could see that she was n’t fit to travel. They said she had been trying to get a place to teach in one of the preparatory schools, and a gentleman who happened to be on the train, said that he had seen her at half

a dozen places in the city, trying to get teaching or work of some kind where she could take the boy. She had her eyes shut part of the time. Why, it was n't any wonder that she did n't get work, for anybody could see at a glance that she was ready to drop into the grave. And, Miss Jane, about half-way to town the romping little fellow tumbled off the seat and knocked over an umbrella that belonged to a lady in front, who had n't any business to stand it in the aisle anyhow. And his poor mother bent over and tried to lift him up, and the next thing we knew she had fallen over, all in a heap, and there was a stream of blood flowing from her mouth. Poor thing! poor thing!"

"Did she die?" asked Jane with sudden tears in her eyes.

"She was alive when we got to town. They had a doctor ready, and he thought she would get to the hospital. She could n't speak, but it was pitiful to see her great eyes follow the boy, who was frightened enough, and kept sobbing, 'Mamma! mamma!' If I ever saw agony in any face, it was in hers, and I seemed to understand what she was thinking of. I just walked up to her while

she lay there, and I said, 'If you 're worried about the boy, ma'am, you can just be at rest, for I 'll see to him, and he sha'n't go into any asylum or anything if you have n't friends, and if you don't pull through. I 'll look after him.' She smiled a little then, and the doctor said a word about me which seemed to ease her mind. I 'll do it, too. The child went to the hospital with his mother, but I shall send there to-morrow and bring him home if she 's dead. If mother wants him to stay with us, he shall; and if not, I 'll find a good home for him. Poor little fellow! He clung to me with both arms when I kissed him good-by. It frightened him to see his mother like that."

"And so you mean to take him," said Jane with shining eyes. "How I wish I could help! Why, if he lives at your house, it 'll be almost like having him with us, for he 'll be running in and out so. Poor mother! How desolate it must seem to her to leave him behind. I 'm glad you were there!"

"So am I," said David North, his steady eyes growing a little misty in their turn. "I left my rose with little Teddy, to comfort him. He

seemed so frightened. He held it up to his mother, and she tried to smile at him. Well, I did n't really mean to tell you all this, when you want to be looking out there and listening to all the talk and the music, but it is a sort of relief. I did n't want to get mother all stirred up telling her about it, until after this was over."

"I like to hear it," said Jane simply, and then a silence fell between the two again, as a violin began in the other room, filling the air with "piercing sweetness."

An hour passed away before David North left the quiet corner to go back to his hostess; an hour of which Jane often thought, in the time that followed, it was so pleasant and restful, and — it was so long before she could pass such an unsaddened hour again. David grew cheerful with the "talking out" of his sad little story, and told amusing stories of his railroad life, and Jane brightened into the gentle animation that was always so pleasant to see. They made remarks on the guests, of whom David knew almost as few as Jane herself, and they discussed the music with careless freedom, untrammelled by "other people's opinion" as to their taste. David made

a marauding excursion into the library, and boldly came back with a book of etchings, which he turned over and discussed with a delightful air of conscious wrong-doing and a subdued manner which gave his stay quite the pleasure of forbidden fruit, so that Jane sat watching him as he went away, with inward laughter over his boyish ways. Mrs. North came a little later and spoke for a few minutes, laughing, too, at the recreant David, and imparting the satisfactory information that Aunt Bab had been in the best of spirits all the afternoon, and had gone home at Maddy's ringing of the tea-bell with the most cheerful alacrity. "Though, to be sure, it is n't just what the rest of us would call *exactly* cheerful," said the pretty old lady, with conscientious regard for truth.

It was while the curtains were drawn a little farther apart than before, that Jane might "over-see" the serving of supper, that she suddenly caught sight of a face which made her lean forward eagerly, quite forgetful that she might herself be seen. A young man was leaning against the parlor door talking gayly to one of the few young ladies in the room.

“That man — here in Miss Wyman’s house!” thought Jane, with an absurd feeling of indignation, which turned into a smile as she reflected that there was absolutely no reason for her wrath, except that this was the identical impertinent young man who had gazed into Mrs. North’s window so long on that evening when Jane had sat alone in the dark to listen to the singing next door. Of course he had not done any harm. Why should not a chance passer stop and look in at such a pretty picture? Jane had no answer to this query; but all the same she regarded the good-looking, rather self-satisfied face with much disfavor, and even went so far as to ask Robert, the dignified servant, who that young man was in the door opposite. But Robert had nothing to say, except that it was a stranger who had been brought by one of the invited guests. Robert had heard him introduced, but did not know him.

“He ain’t at home here, either,” said the sagacious Robert. “I would n’t wonder if he was some young doctor or lawyer that ’s hanging round trying to get started. It was one of them law-school people that brought him over in a cutter. I don’t think much of him.”

The young man turned as they spoke, and looked straight across into the dining-room. Jane drew back hastily, but not until she had caught a peculiar look, that seemed almost like a surprised recognition, as his eyes met hers. Perhaps he had seen her that other night; though why he should look so startled now was more than she could guess. It troubled her a little, unaccountably, and she looked out again in a few minutes with more caution. The stranger had left his place and was standing in the hall talking to an older man with much animation. Jane caught the words "cutter — horses — business — back in half an hour," and presently another glimpse of the unknown youth as he passed down the stairs on his way out of the house. She looked out of the window toward the street. A flood of moonlight lay over the Square, where the snow gleamed with almost dazzling whiteness. Jane heard the jingling of bells as Miss Wyman's guest jumped into the sleigh and drove off. It was a beautiful night for a drive. She watched the horse around the Square, and waited a moment to see it pass out at the other side, but the bells had ceased suddenly. It seemed almost as if the

sleigh had stopped in front of the cottage. Could it be that its driver was watching her sister again through the window? She strained her eyes in the frosty light, watching in uncontrollable impatience for the sound of bells, or a sight of the black horse that had showed so darkly against the whiteness all around. They came again after a little, sounding clearly, though faintly, as the sleigh dashed away out of the opposite street. Jane was quite angry and excited as she waited for the guests to depart so that she could go home and see if Maddy had been annoyed. The sleigh came jingling back before that time, and she watched the object of her wrath as he blanketed the horse and came into the house. She would have liked to call to him out of the alcove, and tell him to keep away from her windows; but as that satisfactory course of action was not open to her, she contented herself with a resolution to "look after" her little sister more closely than ever, and to keep a sharp eye on the surroundings of the four-roomed cottage, that no intruding strangers might "worry" the child.

"The idea of staring at Maddy in that style—that is if he *did* stop there!" thought the head of

the house with a somewhat lame conclusion to her wrathful beginning.

The cottage was quite still and peaceful as Jane went in a few moments later, after the "party was out." Aunt Bab lay calmly and audibly slumbering in her room, and Maddy's pink chamber seemed quiet and dark as the elder sister listened at the door a moment. But Jane was too full of all the excitement of the evening to go to bed herself without looking in. She opened the door and entered softly, shading her lamp with her hand. Maddy lay with her face half buried in the pillow, apparently sound asleep. Her clothes were thrown carelessly on a chair, as if she had undressed hurriedly, and her hair was still coiled on the top of her head. It was unusual, and Jane stooped and looked more closely at the sleeper. How red the child's cheek was! Her sister touched it gently, and was astonished to feel it cold, as if Maddy had just come in from the keen air outside.

"Why, Maddy!" cried Jane, too startled to care for disturbing her sister. "Have you been out-of-doors?"

Maddy turned on her pillow, opening a pair

of eyes remarkably bright and wide-awake looking.

“What on earth should I go out for?” she asked with some asperity. “I’ve been to the door to get the air before I came to bed. It’s enough to make anybody want air to spend an evening alone with Aunt Bab. Why don’t you go to bed yourself, Jane?”

“Why, I never thought that I was waking you up!” said Jane remorsefully. “I was so astonished to find you so cold, dear. You ought to have a shawl over your head when you open the door so. Look here, Maddy, were you frightened or anything? Did you see anybody hanging around to-night? I was so worried about you, dearie. The truth is, a week or two ago I did catch a glimpse of a horrid, impertinent man looking in at the window, and to-night I saw the same man coming this way, I thought; a slim young man, rather disagreeable looking, with a conceited sort of face. Did you see anything of him?”

Maddy sat up in sudden wrath that quite extinguished her amazed sister. “For goodness’ sake, what do you mean, Jane Dunbar?”

she cried. “Can’t you leave me alone for once in your life? No! I have n’t seen any disagreeable-looking young man, or any conceited young man, or any horrid, impertinent young man, and I don’t see how it would hurt you if I had!” with which exordium Maddy threw herself down on her pillow, and Jane fled to her own room with a faint good-night which was not returned.

“Dear me, it’s just like my stupid ways, waking her up so!” said poor Jane, as she caught a murmur of disgust from behind her. “Disagreeable-looking young man!”

CHAPTER XI.

A REBELLION.

THERE was something peculiar in the atmosphere of the four-roomed cottage on the morning after Miss Wyman's party. Jane was puzzling over Maddy's silence and her *nonchalant* air of half-defiant resolution; Aunt Bab was grim and uncommunicative as she always was in the morning, and Maddy herself was evidently thinking too busily to desire conversation, so that the breakfast was eaten almost in silence, in spite of Jane's futile efforts to produce sociability with accounts of her pleasure of the evening before. Maddy played with her tea-cup, and appeared to be lost in abstruse thought when her sister enlarged on the beauty of the Wyman china, and Aunt Bab sighed so dismally that her niece felt guilty for disturbing her sorrow, after venturing a timid opinion, that she would have enjoyed hearing the boy-singer. Altogether it was of no use, and Jane subsided into a mental calculation

with regard to the cost of next Sunday's dinner, ending with the somewhat depressing conclusion that she had run behind this week to the extent of half a dollar.

When Maddy rose and went out of the room without apparently seeing her aunt or sister, the old lady roused from her state of limp gloom to launch after her an indignant apostrophe to the effect that "rolling stones gathered no moss, and that folks that went and sat in the parlor where they could n't hear their poor old aunt call them after she went to bed, ought to have their gray hairs brought down with sorrow to the grave;" but Maddy did not even turn her head. The girl seemed out of patience with all her surroundings, and a little frown was still on her face when she looked in to speak to Jane before going to the city.

"I sha'n't take my lunch to-day," said Maddy decidedly, as her sister came toward her with the little basket. "I don't want to know exactly what I'm going to have, and cold corned-beef is n't what I feel like. I shall go to a restaurant, and you need n't expect me home at supper-time to-night. I told Miss Wilton that I should go

there after my dress, and she asked me to stay a little while. I 'll get home all right. I 'm sure if ever anybody needed a change I do, especially after last night's experience."

"But Maddy," cried Jane in distressed wonder, "I don't quite like to have you stay in the city in the evening. You know you 're so young, dear, and you ought to be so careful of yourself. Do let me go in after your dress! Aunt Bab will let me go, I know. I really don't like the idea, childie."

Maddy lifted her bright head with the old familiar gesture of independence.

"I 'm perfectly able to take care of myself," she said emphatically. "You 're the silliest girl I ever saw, Jane; and I can't help it if you don't like it, I 'm not going to change after I 've accepted an invitation. I don't see why I have n't as good a right to go out to tea as you have, and I sha'n't be poking into your room to wake you up when I come back, either, to see if you 've been out to walk while I 've been away, or if you 've been flirting with strange young men out of the window. I shall do just as I please, and you need n't expect me till you see me. I shall come

home all right, and you 'll just see that I can look out for myself a good deal better than you can look out for me!"

Maddy was evidently angry, though Jane felt a sudden suspicion that she was making herself appear so with a purpose; probably she had been hurt by what seemed like suspicious watchfulness the night before, and the elder sister hurried after her as she hastily shut the parlor door.

"Maddy, Maddy," she cried, "you really *must n't* stay late. I shall be dreadfully anxious about you. If you 'll only let me come after you. Why, Maddy, I did n't mean to vex you last night, if that 's what makes you speak so. You ought n't to mind me, dear, you know, when you 've always been like a child to me. I don't see what 's the matter with you!"

"Well, I 'm *tired* of minding you, Jane Dunbar," cried the girl, working herself into strange excitement as she went on. "I 'm tired of having you treat me like a child, and I sha'n't stand it! You need n't come after me, and I shall stay as long as I choose, and whether you meant to vex me or not, you were perfectly horrid last night to be suspecting and feeling of me, and talking so

about anybody that might happen to look in at the window. I 'm sure nobody would stand there for the sake of looking at *you*, so you need n't be troubled! I wish you 'd just let me alone. You 're enough to drive anybody wild with your everlasting fussing."

Jane stood quite still a moment as the angry voice ran on. A little red spot came into each cheek and then died out, leaving her very pale. She did not speak when Maddy had finished, but turned about and went quietly into the parlor, shutting the door behind her. Aunt Bab looked at her in some wonder as she sat down, still in silence, and took up her work with hands that trembled visibly. It was a long time since Jane had looked like that. Her eyes were bright and her lips set fast, while she basted a seam with nervous haste. To Maddy, looking defiantly in as she passed the window, the figure of the little dressmaker was exasperating in its apparent quiet and unconcern. She had been shocked at her own words as soon as she had uttered them, and would not have been surprised to see her sister in tears. Perhaps if it had been so the girl would have turned back for a good-by, and to say something that might take the

sting out of her hasty speech; at any rate, Maddy told herself that she would have done so. But Jane had only gone to work as quietly as if nothing had happened, and Maddy considered that she was in no need of sympathy.

“I don’t care! She is always interfering and spoiling my pleasure,” said the willful girl, walking hurriedly toward the railway station. “Why could n’t she have left me alone last night instead of poking in there and making me almost tell two fibs? They were n’t fibs, though, and I don’t care if they were. I had a perfect right to go out with Mr. Carling, and I have a perfect right to go to-night, and I’m glad I’m going. I feel just like doing something perfectly wild! Jane Dunbar’s *enough* to make one feel so, with her everlasting goodness — too good to lose her temper even, and sitting there in that superior way, as if I was a naughty baby that was n’t worth minding! I believe she did it on purpose!”

But Maddy’s anger was not of long duration. Jane passed out of her mind altogether, except for an uncomfortable, half-defined feeling of remorse, when she was fairly seated in the train on her way to the office. She laughed and talked

with Mr. North as usual, and spoke gayly to the girls whose acquaintance she had made in her daily trips to the city. If there was a little excitement in her manner, it only made her eyes clearer and her lovely color brighter. Mr. Carling, meeting her on the street as she left the car, nodded approvingly at the sight of her bright face.

“You’re going; I know you’re going!” he cried. “Maidie, you’re a little jewel, and I knew you had spirit enough to stand up for yourself. What did the dragon say to you when you proposed it?”

“I did n’t tell her,” said Maddy with a guilty laugh. “I just could n’t make up my mind to. She’d cry, and we’d have had such a fuss that it would be horrid. It was horrid enough as it was, and I was awfully cross to her, and she walked into the other room without saying good-by, and I came off and slammed the door! I told her I was going to stay at Miss Wilton’s a little while, and I never mentioned that you would come after me there! So now I’m in for it, I suppose, and what on earth she’ll say when I get back to-night I don’t know; but I don’t care much, as long as I shall have had the evening first.”

“ You ’re a jewel! ” said the young man again. “ O Maidie, we shall have an evening worth a little fuss for! Think of Nilsson, and think what fun it will be for us to get supper first together, and have a regular lark out of it. You ’ve never had any fun in your days, and I just wish I had the say about you. I ’d bring you out in a hurry —especially if I was rich! ”

Maddy smiled brightly and walked on without replying.

“ There was n’t a girl at that party that could hold a candle to you! ” went on her companion candidly. “ I looked them all over to compare with you, as I said last night, and if you ’d been there, you would have been ahead of them all; moon among stars, you know, and rose among violets, and all that, like Elizabeth of Bohemia. Why did n’t the old lady invite you instead of your sister, I wonder? Though if she had we would n’t have had our drive. O Maidie, was n’t it fun? ”

They both laughed out like two children.

“ It was glorious! ” cried Maddy, clasping her hands impulsively. “ How did you ever think of it? And how lucky it was that Aunt Bab was

asleep, and was n't it exciting wondering if she would wake up, and if anybody could possibly find it out, and all that, while we were flying along so? I have n't been to ride since I was a little girl before; not since" — she stopped suddenly.

That last drive had been on a Christmas when Jane and father had saved and planned for a month to give their darling such a treat as a real sleigh-ride. Jane had stood in the door and waved her handkerchief as father drove off with her. Maddy remembered that Aunt Bab had been hurt when they spoke of leaving her alone, and that Jane had given up the idea of going, too, because she could n't bear to have any one unhappy on Christmas Day. They had driven for an hour, and Jane had hugged and kissed them both when they came back, and had triumphantly led them to a wonderful supper of cocoa and stewed oysters. What a happy time it had been!

"I wish I had n't been so cross this morning," said the girl hesitatingly; but her companion laughed the harder at the words.

"O you little goose!" he cried. "It won't hurt the dragon. Come, tell me what she said last night! Did she find you out at all?"

The dimples began to come out again around Maddy's mouth. She had a vivid remembrance of her hasty flight to her room, and the elaborate imitation of slumber which had been such a failure. The fun of the thing was uppermost in her mind again as she told her story, even mischievously adding Jane's remarks about the impertinent young man, and watching her comrade with comical gravity as he enlarged on the "dragon's" lack of perception.

"I declare, she does keep watch!" he said. "And so she does n't admire my personal appearance? Well, she is n't likely to be troubled with the sight of me very often. I think I prefer your society without hers, as a rule."

"She 'll see you to-night," said Maddy, laughing again. "I suppose she 'll be sitting up, and she 'll come flying out to interview you, I 'm afraid. You 'd better just leave me at the gate and hurry off. I don't want a regular fuss with you there. Oh, dear me! I do hope she won't talk as if I was the wickedest girl that ever lived, and make up her mind that I 'm deceitful and all that! I almost wish I had n't ever let her think you were old; only it was such fun to hear the

queer things she said about you, and it did n't seem any harm at all. I don't suppose I ought to have said I 'd go to-night, and then we could have just gone on as we have all these months, and she never would have suspected."

"Yes she would, before long," said the young man with a peculiar smile. "If she goes on making your life a burden to you this way, and raising all sorts of ridiculous scruples about the most natural things in the world for a pretty girl like you,—as if you could live just like that prim, little old maid,—why, she may wake up some fine morning and find you missing altogether. I don't know whether I 'd put up with much more or not!"

Maddy lifted a pair of startled, glowing eyes. A wave of crimson rose in her soft cheeks, and her lips parted in breathless excitement. Mr. Carling looked down at her with an amused smile.

"Don't look so frightened, you dear little thing," he said patronizingly. "I 'm not going to carry you off in a bag like the black man that my nurse used to scare me with. Only that pious little dragon of yours need n't think she is going to put you in a strait-jacket while I 'm here to

prevent it. There, Maidie, put her out of your head like a good girl and just think about to-night. I'd like to peep into your dreams after you've seen 'Faust' through! And now I must leave you, or old Kean will see us come up together, and give you a lecture, very likely, as you're five minutes late. Don't you let the old fellow get any more work out of you than you can help to-day, for I want you all fresh for this evening."

"Good-by," said Maddy a little shyly. "I shall be ready for you at seven, as you said."

She turned and looked back a moment as she went up the stairs, making a lovely picture, framed in the dark archway that opened from the street. A little boot-black on the pavement below gazed at her with silent admiration, and forgot to cry "Shine!" until she had passed out of sight.

"She's a daisy!" he remarked with the air of a *connoisseur*, and was immediately astonished by a slight shake from the young man who had accompanied the object of his approbation, and a stern admonition to mind what he was about, and not make remarks about ladies. Mr. Carling felt

himself constituted Maddy's chief earthly protector this morning, and would have shaken half a dozen boot-blacks on her account. How pretty she had looked on the shadowed staircase, glancing back with that soft, startled look in her eyes! “ ‘Sweetest eyes were ever seen,’ ” quoted Mr. Carling, and set the line down in his memory as an appropriate one to be brought into conversation the next time he “talked books” with the girl in whose “education” he took an interest. Maddy would probably like that poem on “Catarina” in Mrs. Browning. Mr. Carling would look it over and learn part of it by heart. There would be plenty of time during his office-hours. The truth was that the young lawyer was not overburdened with clients, and found much leisure to pursue the literary studies which made him so wise in the eyes of Madeline Dunbar. It was very pleasant to him to be so considered.

“If I only had two or three hundred more a year I believe I'd do it,” said Mr. Carling half aloud, as he walked briskly down the street.

CHAPTER XII.

AT THE OPERA.

M R. KEAN found occasion for wonder in the behavior of his copying-clerk that day. Maddy was generally bright and accurate in her work, and the old man had a certain attachment for the pretty young girl who made such a pleasant picture in his dusty office; but to-day she was dreamy and almost listless; more than one mistake crept into her copying; and once, during the morning, the sound of her pen ceased entirely for so long that the lawyer's attention was attracted by the stillness, and he looked sharply up to find her with hands idle in her lap, and wide eyes gazing out through the network of telegraph wires outside the window, as if she were wandering in a world where tasks were unknown, with the sparrows that flew and twittered in brown companies against the dazzling winter sky. She started guiltily and caught up her pen as Mr. Kean stirred, and her employer turned to his own work again with a grim smile and a half-amused

consciousness that if the culprit had not been so very pretty something of a lecture would have ensued, on his own part, for such a waste of time.

"It won't do, though," said the old man soberly, as he turned over a page of writing where the name of Marguerite had unaccountably crept into a mass of legal phrases, conveying a remarkable impression that the gentle German heroine was guarding herself with the utmost care against the "party of the second part," in an agreement with regard to the sale of a patent shoe blacking. "No, it won't do, and if she acts like this to-morrow, I'll take her to task. She's got something on her mind, plainly enough, but it won't do to let it interfere with business."

But the girl wrote and dreamed and waited for evening with happy forgetfulness of the morrow; and the day slipped away as the longest day will do, and the dusk settled down over the city, and the office was closed. It seemed to Maddy that the whole city wore an air of festivity as she walked up the brightly lighted avenue to the dressmaker's, where she was to exchange her every-day gown for the blue silk, and where Mr. Carling was to call for her. It was difficult to

walk sedately with the prospect of such an evening of pleasure before her. She would have liked to dance along the pavement and to sing for pure delight at thought of what was coming.

“I wish the time would go faster,” she thought. “What a goose I should have been not to go! No wonder Mr. Carling laughed at me when I spoke of it.”

There was only one thing which threw a shadow over her joyous mood; it was provoking that anything should cross her mind to bring discomfort in its train. Maddy felt quite angry with the inward picture that would lurk in the background of her mind, occasionally almost obscuring the gay visions that surrounded it—a picture of a quiet little room, where a solitary figure stood close to the window, watching through the darkness with anxious, frightened eyes, and hands clasped nervously, according to Jane’s way when she was worried.

“I don’t see why I don’t forget all about her,” said Maddy impatiently. “There! I will! I sha’n’t let my fun be spoiled by such nonsense;” and a little later, when she stood before the mirror in Miss Wilton’s dressing-room, observing the

effect of her dress, and deciding with shy pleasure that Mr. Carling was sure to think it becoming, she told herself that she had quite succeeded in putting away the thought of Jane and the home that would be so still without her that evening. A little strength of mind was of great service in getting rid of unwelcome thoughts, Maddy concluded, and she was quite proud of her resolution.

But no resolution was needed to banish qualms of conscience when, a few minutes afterward, Mr. Carling appeared, brisk and elegant, with a carnation in his button-hole, and a bunch of pink roses for Maddy. He superintended the pinning on of the latter with critical appreciation of their effect against the blue silk, and then, as they left the house, he produced a package from his pocket which, being unrolled with much glee, turned out to be a fan of rosy feathers, which he flirted gracefully in the keen air to the intense delight of a couple of small boys who watched the proceedings from the window of the next house.

“I thought perhaps you might not have one, and this is just the right color for you,” said Mr. Carling, smiling at the shining face with which Maddy uttered her thanks. Certainly the girl

had never looked so pretty, and her cavalier quite glowed with pride and benevolence as he reflected that if he had not come to her rescue, she might never have appeared at all in any place where her beauty would attract the attention it ought to secure. He was gratified to see more than one admiring glance turned toward his companion, both at the restaurant and after they entered the opera house; and he delighted himself by making her talk to bring out the play of dimples about her mouth, and call forth the flitting color that was perhaps her greatest charm. Mr. Frederick Carling regarded Maddy with a curious sense of proprietorship to-night.

As for the girl herself, she was in fairyland; and while the performance went on she sat in a beautiful dream, where everything beyond her immediate surroundings was swept away in a tide of wondering delight. There was no thought of Jane now to trouble her; and if that pale, little frightened face had suddenly appeared between her and the stage, Maddy would have waved it one side with annoyed eagerness. Why should one pause to think of a foolish, "fussy" elder sister while Gretchen's voice was ringing out so

gloriously, and while the gleaming jewels that were to draw her down to ruin were shining on neck and arms and that golden hair?

David North stepped briskly forth from the nine o'clock train, whistling a lively tune, and buttoning his overcoat more closely across his chest, for it was growing colder with every hour. There had been only a few passengers out, and the station looked quite deserted in the flickering gaslight. Only one waiting figure was in sight: a figure bent a little forward as if eager to see some one. It hurried to meet the conductor the next moment, and he gave a start of surprise as he recognized the face.

"My dear Miss Dunbar," he cried, "what has happened?"

Jane caught at his arm involuntarily for support as he came up. She was trembling in every limb, and her face was deathly white. It seemed to her friend that she was just about to faint, but she controlled herself and spoke with a kind of gasp.

"It 's Maddy!" she cried. "Oh, where is Maddy?"

“Do you mean that you don’t know?” exclaimed David. “I have n’t seen her since morning. I thought of her at five o’clock, but supposed it was some arrangement of your own. Why, Miss Jane, don’t tremble so. Try to tell me what is wrong, and I ’ll do anything in the world to help you.” He led her to a seat and waited a moment for her to compose herself before going on. The ticket agent stared curiously from the little window at sight of the agitated face, but neither of them noticed him.

“Did you expect her as usual?” asked David gently, after a pause, “or is it because this is the last train? It is n’t the last to-night, though. There is another at eleven, because of the opera with Nilsson. If she ’s with friends, won’t they take care of her and bring her home on that, or send you word?”

Jane shook her head. “I can’t think where she can be,” she said tremulously: “She only said she was going to the dressmaker’s and should n’t be home at the usual time. I ’ve been watching every hour, and at last I could n’t bear it any longer, and I just went in to your mother and begged her to let Aunt Bab

sit with her so that I could come down here. I 've been here since eight waiting for this train. I could n't help feeling as if she might be about here somehow, and it was so dark to go back and forth! Oh, where can the child be?"

David looked grave and thoughtful. It was no light thing for a young and beautiful girl like Madeline Dunbar to be left alone in a large city at night. He searched his mind for some suggestion of relief and caught at the first which offered.

"She 's stayed to visit somewhere and missed this train, and now she 'll take the last one."

"She did n't know anybody well enough to care to visit in the evening," said Jane, with tears in her eyes. "O Mr. North! if anything has happened to Maddy, I believe it will kill me."

"We won't let anything happen if we can help it," said David soothingly, though his brows were knit. "Do you know where the dressmaker lives? Yes? Well, then, wait for me here a few moments, and I 'll get a horse. We can drive into town in an hour the short way, and we 'll find her, if she 's to be found. Perhaps — very likely — she 's right there. It was careless to miss the train, but such things will happen now and

then, and I'm quite sure we shall find her and bring her home."

He walked away with a nod of farewell that was comforting in its cheerfulness, and Jane waited, leaning wearily back in her seat, with a dull feeling of thankfulness that at least there was some one to think for her and say what to do in this crisis. Jane was not accustomed to being helped in emergencies, and it was a strange relief to feel that she need not strain her frightened thoughts in a vain attempt to plan the best course of action. Mr. North would be sure to know, and she tried to calm herself with the thought, so as not to be utterly unable to help him in the search.

If only there were anything to be done, it would not be so unbearable. Jane felt every moment of inaction a torture, and her heart beat wildly with all manner of fears and conjectures during the little time that passed before Mr. North came back. If Maddy should be found helpless with fright, or if she had been robbed or insulted, or — if she never should be found at all! Jane had heard of mysterious disappearances, and she wrung her hands involuntarily at the idea. It was strange that with the intensity of terror,

came a flittering memory of words read lately in one of Mr. Carling's books, which she had opened in one of her rare moments of leisure. It was a song about a mother standing in a cottage door, and shading her eyes with her hand, while she watched for her little son, calling him in vain, and struggling against the fear that he might never come home from the shore. Jane had read the little fragment over many times, and a part of it floated through her mind now, with strange comfort: —

“ But then she knows whatever betide
The Spirit of God will be his guide,
And Christ the Blessed, his little brother,
Will carry him back to his longing mother.”

“ Amen,” said Jane, unconsciously, as if the verse had been a prayer. She had grown more quiet by the time they were seated in the sleigh, and was even able to answer Mr. North’s questions, as they drove rapidly up the street leading to Barton Square. They must stop there and leave word with his mother and Aunt Bab, he said. It would be late before they could return from the city, perhaps very late, and there must not be three to be anxious about at home. He

spoke quite calmly and quietly as if they were only going for a long drive, and hope and courage rose afresh at his words. Mrs. North ran out to the sleigh a moment when they stopped, bringing a warm shawl for Jane, and carrying a steaming cup of the beef-tea for which she was famous.

"I 've made David take a cup inside," she said, "and now you must drink this, my dear. It 's a cold night, and you 've a long way to go. It 's lucky that I happened to have it in the house, for Jemmy Brian who broke his leg yesterday. Take it, Jane dear, for you 'll need it."

Jane did as she was bid, mechanically, and then put out her hand to take that of her friend, looking into her face appealingly. "Do you think we shall find her?" she said in a whisper.

"I do," answered Mrs. North quietly. "You must n't expect anything else. David knows what to do, and he 'll never give up till he brings her back. I think, just as he does, that Maddy stayed somewhere to visit, and missed the train. Don't be nervous, dear, but remember that in quietness and confidence shall be your strength."

"I 'll try," said Jane faintly, as Mr. North came out of the house, "and, Mrs. North — will you" —

"My dear, I shall pray for you every minute," said the old lady, answering the look in the child-like, imploring eyes.

"Thank you," said Jane softly, "and Aunt Bab? It won't trouble you too much?"

Mrs. North bent forward and kissed the little dressmaker without speaking. There were tears in her gentle eyes. Jane understood what they meant, and smiled faintly for reply as the horse bounded forward.

"What could I have done without you both?" she said gratefully. "I can't ever forget it or repay you, Mr. North."

"Don't talk of repaying," said David, turning to look down at her with steadfast, quiet eyes, that held a certain brooding tenderness such as one might feel for a frightened child. "You don't know how glad it makes me to be able to help you. And now, you must n't worry at all, at least until we've found that dressmaker. I think she can tell us where Maddy is. Very likely we shall find her there, crying her eyes out because she knows you are frightened about her, and we'll just pack the child in with us and carry her off, and none of us will be the worse, and we

shall be a sleigh-ride ahead. Go on, pony. Are you warm, Miss Jane?"

Yes, Jane was quite warm. She clasped her hands tightly under her shawl, and tried to talk to her companion as they flew along the frozen road, but it was difficult work. Her words would come in broken sentences, with pauses between; and it was hard to control the fluttering breath that came almost in a gasp, now and then. The moon climbed higher and higher, turning the whole landscape into silver and ebony as they came out of the suburb into the road that led between open fields to the next village, and so on toward the city. The air was so still that the sound of their flying bells seemed to fill the sky as if it were the only sound in the world, Jane thought. She could almost have fancied that they were crying "Maddy! Maddy!" with her, and the words of the little song wound strangely in and out amid their silvery jangle, —

"Christ the Blessed, her little brother,
Christ the Blessed!"



An Anxious Ride.—Page 201.

CHAPTER XIII.

AN ANXIOUS RIDE.

THERE were lights here and there along the roadside, and at one place they passed a crowd of boys and girls, coasting down a hillside, with wild, rollicking cries of "Lulla! lulla!" One or two of them sent a hurrah after the dashing sleigh, and the keen air seemed to take up the call and toss it from hill to hill in ringing echoes clear as if uttered by the very spirit of winter. Over the bridge they flew, where the moonlight appeared broken into a hundred glancing spears, along the dark ice, on into the next town, through streets where more than one vision of home comfort looked out between parted curtains: a mother with her boys and girls about her; a husband and wife talking together by a glowing fire; a man lying luxuriously in an easy-chair, with books scattered about him. How many quiet nooks there were in the world, and how apart from them all Jane Dunbar seemed, flying along with all the sparkling beauty of the winter night about her and

such a whirling storm of thought within! She gazed straight out, over the dark, tossing head of the horse, with eyes that seemed only intent on watching the way before them, and yet took in every detail of the scene, with strange distinctness: white fields, flashing river, snowy hills against the dark, starry sky, the cheerful streets of the little town. And through them all flitted ceaselessly a figure which rose before her wherever her glance fell, causing her to shrink and tremble and then control herself with the thought that she was only weak and distrustful to fancy the worst — the figure of a girl wandering through chilly streets, with all the pretty color faded from her cheeks, and crying piteously, “Oh, what shall I do?”

The talk grew more and more interrupted, and at last ceased altogether, except as Mr. North asked some question with regard to her comfort, or spoke cheerily to the horse. Jane was grateful to him for leaving her quiet. One did not need words, somehow, with Mr. North, and it was easier not to try to think of them. The silence seemed to bring out and make sensible a certain rest and strength in his strong, quiet presence, so that calm-

ness came back and the danger of losing self-control went by before the gleaming city lights made a "dreary dawn" close before them. Jane even tried to smile in response to the kindly look which her companion bent upon her as he said, —

"Now, then, we shall only be a few minutes before we find the dressmaker. Keep up a good heart, Miss Jane, and don't worry."

"I ought n't to worry, with you to help me," said Jane, with some show of courage. "I am always foolish over Maddy, I know; but mother left her to me, and so I got into the way of looking after her when I was such a child myself that I can't help it very well. You must n't mind if I am frightened a little. I am sure you know better than I do about it."

"That's right," he answered, with another little approving nod. "You're not foolish, though. Maddy is a fortunate girl to have such a sister to love her. Hark! There's a clock striking half-past ten. We've made good time. I hope the poor child has n't been too much worried to enjoy the ride home, for we want to take the good of that, with our minds relieved."

Jane smiled again, looking about her as they

passed through the silent streets, as if she might catch a glimpse of her child turning some corner, or coming to meet them along the icy pavement. There seemed to be very few in the street. "The cold must have driven everybody in," David said. Only around the theater which they passed on their way were carriages waiting, and a few loungers hanging about the door. A distant strain of music reached them as they turned the corner.

"It 's Nilsson," said David, looking over his shoulder with some interest. "They say there 's nobody like her in 'Faust.' It will be a pretty thing, though, if they hold over so late that people will miss that eleven o'clock train, this freezing night. There is n't any too much time, and they are n't through yet, evidently."

Jane did not answer. She was holding her breath now, with the consciousness that they were close to Miss Wilton's, and that in a few minutes she would know where Maddy was, or else—she looked beseechingly at her companion as they reached the house. He had grown graver and his eyes were resolute and bright, as he stopped.

"I 'll go in," he said. "Wait for me here a minute, for there is no use in stopping if she

should be somewhere else. Don't be frightened, dear."

Neither he nor Jane noticed the little unconscious word at the moment, but long afterward it came back to her with sudden sweetness. It seemed quite natural, somehow, spoken in that gentle, protecting voice as if by one much older and stronger than the trembling little woman in the sleigh. David North was always gentle and protecting toward children, and he had seemed to think of Jane as one to-night.

How long the few minutes were which passed while he was in the house! The whole street seemed whirling before Jane's eyes for an instant, as he came down the steps and she caught sight of his face. What had he heard, to give him that stern look? She tried to speak, but the words died on her lips and she could only gasp instead. He hurried forward at the faint sound, looking anxiously at her.

"She's safe!" he cried. "Miss Jane, don't look so. Indeed, she is quite safe. Miss Wilton knows all about it. Will you come in and see her? Or, no; we must n't stop. Don't, Miss Jane. You must n't let yourself give way

now, for we must go to the station as fast as we can drive.”

Jane had fallen back in her seat, quite weak and white from the sudden relief. She burst into a sudden sob as he sprang into the sleigh and turned the corner of the street, but controlled herself with an effort, at the suggestion of more to be done. David North paused a moment before he went on. It seemed as if he were almost unwilling to say more. The stern look came back to his eyes, and he looked studiously in the other direction while he spoke.

“Miss Jane, Maddy has done a foolish thing to-night, that is all, and your fright was just for nothing. It seems that young Carling, who lends her books, you know, and goes in and out on the same train so often, came to Miss Wilton’s and took her off to the opera with him. I suppose it was a great temptation, and she could n’t resist taking the opportunity; though there was no time to get word to you. He ought to have known better; but, luckily, we’re here, and there’ll no harm come of it.”

“Maddy — gone — to the opera!” exclaimed Jane. She was sitting upright again, in shocked

surprise. "Has she gone to hear Nilsson, and without" — She caught herself up hastily. Maddy should not be blamed by her to an outsider, even in the moment of startled pain. "I did n't quite understand; *young* Mr. Carling, you said. Is he the son of the one she told me about, or" — a sudden light broke in upon her, with the very words, leaving her dumb with the discovery of such a concealment.

There was a look almost of agony in her eyes as she sat silent, trying to gather herself up under the weight of bitterness which seemed to have fallen upon her. Everything was explained now: the laughter which had followed some of her questions; Maddy's varying moods, and her occasional remorseful tenderness. A hundred little circumstances rushed back upon her memory in bewildering confusion of trouble, mingled with a wild fear of the future, and a sudden overmastering anguish of wounded love which swept away her last despairing effort at self-control in a passionate burst of weeping.

"Oh, what shall I do? What shall I do?" she cried, as she had fancied Maddy crying, in that piteous, foolish vision. "O Maddy, Maddy! what shall I do?"

Mr. North's quiet voice broke in upon her again. "It is n't any wonder that you 're upset, after all the anxiety, Miss Jane, but you must n't give way so." There were tears in his own kind eyes as he watched her, but Jane could not know that. "You must stop crying if you can. Do you hear, Miss Jane? I am quite sure that they will miss the last train, and if we are not there to take Maddy home —"

Jane put away her grief and perplexity with another violent effort. It seemed to her at that moment that she would give all the world to creep away into some quiet corner and cry herself to sleep, like a child, but if there were danger to Maddy, she must command herself. She dashed the tears from her eyes and tried to look steady and composed as they drew up before the station.

"You are very thoughtful," she said. "I never thought of this, and I suppose it never entered Maddy's head."

"They would find it hard to get a carriage to go so far," said Mr. North, tying the horse. "There now, come. We 'll go into the waiting-room. Don't be too worried about it all, Miss Jane. Young Carling does n't mean any harm,

any more than your sister. They are just two thoughtless children, who ought to be well scolded for frightening you so. I 'm rather glad that he will have a few minutes of worry about getting her home. It serves him right for doing such a thing. But we 're here in time, and it won't be long now before you can rest. I declare, there 's the train now, and only three or four here to take it.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE TRUANT FOUND.

THERE was a great bustle in the station during the next five minutes. People came flying along the street in carriages to climb into the train, panting from their rush along the platform. One or two nervous men called "Stop!" from the sidewalk as they ran up. An old lady burst into tears, and when with a decisive puff and snort the train moved slowly off, half a dozen people were left at the door of the waiting-room, and more were coming hurriedly down the street, looking at each other with blank faces as they reached the place.

Mr. Carling and Maddy were among the later arrivals, and the two who were waiting for them stepped out of the door as they saw them coming; the young man frowning in a worried way, and the girl with dilated eyes and glowing cheeks, evidently quite unconscious of his uneasiness and with no thought beyond the pleasure just past. Jane noted hurriedly the rose-colored fan in her

hand, and the trailing bunch of flowers which she had taken off so as to fasten her jacket more closely, and which hung drooping in the biting air. She caught the rapt, dreamy look in the beautiful eyes, and saw that the scarlet lips were trembling a little, as if they were just ready to break into an echo of Gretchen's songs. How lovely Maddy was to look at! But the next moment the girl had seen her and stopped, with surprise and anger flashing all over the face that had been so happy just before. Jane had never seen Maddy so angry. The eyes of the two sisters met for a moment: the one pair, indignant, sorrowful, and accusing; the other, with a hard look of defiance. Then Maddy turned away with a word to her companion, which caused him to start and flush angrily in his turn, as his glance fell on the pale little dressmaker in her shabby garments.

“I think we 'll go in at the other door,” he said nonchalantly to Maddy; but at the same moment Mr. North stepped forward, lifting his hat with studied politeness.

“Your train is gone, Mr. Carling, and it is the last, you know. We saw that you must miss it and waited to catch you and take charge of Miss

Maddy. I have a horse here, and we are going directly home."

The young man frowned and shrugged his shoulders.

"Much obliged for your thoughtfulness, I am sure," he said with a touch of contempt in his tone. "But when I invite a lady to spend an evening with me, I generally prefer to see her home myself. Have you and Miss Dunbar — I suppose it *is* Miss Dunbar! — been taking a constitutional this balmy evening? You have had rather a long drive, I should say."

"Your message — I suppose you sent one — telling Miss Dunbar where her sister was, did not reach her," said Mr. North quietly, "and she was naturally frightened. We have been looking for her, and, fortunately, we have found her. You would find it difficult to get a horse at this time to go out to her home, and you wish to consider her welfare, of course." He looked steadily into the young man's shifting eyes, and they fell before his.

"But I told you not to expect me till late," said Maddy in childish anger, forgetful of every one but Jane, and her own sense of injury. "I

never saw anybody like you, Jane. I do think you might as well make up your mind that I can take care of myself without needing you to follow me as if I was a baby!"

"Hush!" said Jane, with sudden sternness that stopped the girl's words in spite of herself. "You don't know what you are talking about. Be quiet, and thank Mr. North that you are able to get home at all to-night."

She spoke in such a low voice that her words were unnoticed by the two men who were still talking somewhat excitedly; but Maddy grew still and stood, in silence, flushing hotly while Mr. North added a few grave words with regard to the difficulty of obtaining a conveyance, and the necessity of going home at once. There were other people near them, and some were beginning to cast curious glances in the direction of the little group.

"Everybody will be noticing us," said Mr. Carling impatiently. "Well, if you insist upon it, I suppose Miss Madeline must go with you; but I have my own opinion of any one who will spy out a girl's actions in this way. I wonder if she's always to be accountable to her sister for

everything. Look here one moment, Miss Madeline. I want to speak to you before you go."

Maddy stepped apart into the shadow of the door for a minute. Her cheeks were crimson with excitement and anger, and her eyes were full of petulant tears. Jane heard some hurried words about "meddling," and "unbearable," and an exhortation "not to put up with it." She saw the young man take Maddy's hand in his own and hold it while he spoke, and caught the curl of his lip as he glanced over his shoulder at herself. Then she stepped forward quite calmly, as they two came toward the sleigh.

"Mr. Carling," she said in her clear, low voice, "Mr. Carling, I don't suppose you mean any harm to Maddy by doing as you have done to-night; but if you will just remember that she is a young girl without any experience, and that her father and mother are both dead, so that I 'm the only one left her, you will understand how I feel about it, and you will be thankful, too, I believe, that we came to find her to-night. It is only Maddy's happiness that I want, and she knows that. I wish you would try to think how you would want your sister treated, and try to do by

Maddy as you would like any one else to do by her. I can't think it is quite like a gentleman not to be as careful of any girl as he would be of his own sister."

Mr. Frederick Carling bowed with flashing eyes. "Thank you," he said with a slight sneer; "but as I am not the possessor of a sister, I 'm not at all in need of a lecture on the best manner of treating one. Indeed, I am rather thankful that I never had one, from the part they seem to play in some families. I really don't think I am suffering for lack of a household strait-jacket, though"—

But here a strong hand fell on his shoulder and a low voice interrupted him.

"Be kind enough to take yourself off before I forget myself far enough to knock you down," said Mr. North in his ear. "It 's bad enough to teach a young girl to deceive her sister, and to endanger her reputation into the bargain; but when you use such words to the one who would give her life to save her, it 's more than I can stand. Go away and leave us alone, or we shall have a scene that you will not be likely to enjoy."

The young man turned on his heel with a

furious look at the muscular, stern-browed conductor. "You are wise in choosing your time to threaten," he said magnificently. "Of course, in the presence of ladies — good-by, Maidie. Be careful of yourself."

He walked hastily away, with a lowering brow, kicking a stray dog out of his path with such fierceness that the street resounded with yelps for a moment. Perhaps no small part of his wrath was due to the consciousness that his purse was so nearly empty that the price of a conveyance to take Maddy home would have amounted to at least double the sum it contained. If he could only have whisked her triumphantly away before the meddling couple who had spoiled their pleasure, Mr. Carling felt that he would have cared much less for their interference.

"Confound it all! I 'll have the best of them yet," he said, as he went rushing toward his lodgings.

The homeward drive was a strange and miserable one to Jane. Her excitement was beginning to wear off a little, and the reaction that followed left her dull and quiet, trembling from head to foot, and filled with a burning sense of wrong —

aggravated by the recognition in Mr. Carling of the unknown man who had watched outside the cottage on those two nights — which made it impossible to talk, even if anybody had spoken to her.

But Maddy held her head erect after her old fashion when displeased, and talked and laughed to Mr. North, recklessly discussing the opera, and utterly ignoring her sister, while David, after a few attempts to draw Jane into the conversation, and an occasional look into her face, as if to find out what she would like, answered the girl's questions, and drew her on in talk, so as to fill up the time without making it manifest that the older sister was purposely left out. Jane was grateful to him in a dull way for the acted fiction. She was turning over and over in her mind what she was to do to help her sister in this crisis. How should she speak to her, and what could she do that would not be just the wrong thing? It seemed as if she were sure to take the most unwise course, and she shrank and trembled more than ever with dread of the scene that was likely to follow when they should be left alone. What would Maddy say, with that indescribable,

scornful lifting of her head, and how should she herself control her own indignation so as to save a downright quarrel?

“I ’ll try not to say much of anything to-night,” she decided, “and then to-morrow evening, when she is quieted down, I ’ll get Mrs. North to come in and try to talk to her. She ’s so wise and gentle that Maddy can’t help listening to her, I ’m sure. If I can only keep from a scene to-night!”

But when the horse stopped in Barton Square and Mrs. North came out to meet them, with her quiet smile and pleasant word for each, Jane’s forced composure began to fail her. She threw her arms about her friend and clung to her a moment, as she might have done to her own mother. Maddy saw it, and smiled sarcastically as she came into the lighted parlor.

“Sleighting is n’t becoming to everybody,” she said, with strained gayety. “Jane’s eyes are as red as roses instead of her cheeks, and the end of her nose is a delicate blue. I ’d advise her to thaw out as soon as possible, if she does n’t want to be taken for a rainbow. Did you get tired out, waiting over here, Mrs. North? I suppose you

had to get Aunt Bab to bed and everything. It was a shame, and I don't see what possessed Jane to be so silly."

Mrs. North cast an involuntary glance of surprise at her son, but he was bringing a chair to the fire for Jane, and seating her in it gently.

"You must n't try to talk things over to-night," he said, in his cheery voice; "and we must n't stop one minute, mother, for she is quite worn out. Miss Maddy had missed the train, but, luckily, we found where she was and brought her safely home. Do you know, it 's after twelve o'clock, and I must be off at five. Good-night, Miss Jane. Take care of her, Miss Maddy, for she 's been through a good deal to-night."

Jane could only smile with quivering lips as the two went away, Maddy opening the door for them and saying good-by as if nothing had happened. She came back into the room a moment later to pick up the fan and roses which she had laid down on the table. Her lips were firmly set, and she took not the slightest notice of the weary little figure by the fire. Jane watched her in silence as she turned away; but as the girl opened the door to go away without a word, the elder sister called after her with sudden yearning, —

“Maddy, are you going away without speaking to me? What have I done that you should treat me so? O child! if you only knew what a risk you have been running!”

But Maddy turned on her with blazing eyes. “I don’t care if I never speak to you again, Jane Dunbar!” she cried. “I won’t stand it to be spied upon and tracked around so, and I ’ll never get over it as long as I live! You ’ll drive me distracted if I live with you long, and I wish I could just get out of the house and never come into it again. Spoiling my pleasure and insulting Mr. Carling, and sitting there like a martyr, to make an impression on Mrs. North! You need n’t try to preach to me to-night, anyhow, for I won’t stand one word!”

She flew out of the door and up-stairs before Jane could answer, and a moment later the door of her own room was hastily closed and locked. Jane had half risen as if to follow, but sank back again at the sound from above. Her overtired nerves gave way beneath the outburst of passion, and she burst into hysterical sobbing, which left her at last, white and shaken, to make her way up-stairs as best she could, and try vainly to find rest at Aunt Bab’s side.

CHAPTER XV.

NO GOOD-BY.

THE dull light of the wintry morning was filling the room as Jane awoke from an uneasy slumber. She had lain all night wide awake and quiet, gazing into the darkness and trying to think what was best to be done in the new emergency which seemed the most trying of any that had come to her in her toilsome, anxious life; praying piteously for strength and guidance, and telling herself with troubled insistence that if she could only keep from more words until Maddy's anger should be past, the wayward girl would come back to herself, and this cloud would melt away in spite of its seeming blackness. Maddy loved her, Jane was sure of that, for all the bitter words of a few hours before, and the very openness of her anger would make it pass the sooner. Perhaps to-morrow the girl would meet her as usual, with a blithe good-morning, and the comical ignoring of any past excitement, which was Maddy's way of signifying that she was ready to

“make up.” If only it might be so, and if she would listen to any warning, however gentle! But Jane had a sharp, pained sense that her child had gone beyond her help in this crisis; that anything she might say or do would be construed as meddling; and that advice must come to Maddy from outside.

Well—there was Mrs. North. The face of her sweet old neighbor rose before her in the darkness, with indescribable comfort; and beside it was another, with the grave, clear eyes which had looked so kindly at her through that anxious evening. Poor Mr. North! Jane remembered with a sudden pang her fancies of the last few months with regard to himself and Maddy. If he did care for her sister, what a disappointment it must have been to him to find her so. How had Jane been so selfish as not to think of it before, and how good he had been to put his own feelings out of sight so completely! Oh, if Maddy could only understand the happiness which she might be throwing away! And then came a swift thought which brought with it a certain comfort mingled with a new sting of pain. Perhaps that was just what had made Maddy so angry. It might be

that the very knowledge that Mr. North knew of her escapade had caused that passionate outbreak. Jane's air-castles had been built too broad and high to topple down all at once. Maddy might be led away by a sudden desire to see something of the pleasures from which she had always been shut out; she might be foolish and even reckless, but her sister could not quite think that the affair was more serious than a girlish freak which might do no harm in the end, if only the child could be helped to see the right. David North was so wise and strong! If only Maddy were really growing to care for him, it seemed impossible that the influence of this stranger could be lasting. Surely, the girl's own sense of right would prevail when she grew calm enough to see the danger into which she had been led! But here came back the remembrance of the long deceit practiced during the last six months; and Jane fell into silent weeping, wandering in a maze of fears and conjectures which only ended when she dropped into a troubled sleep as the day was beginning to break.

When she opened her eyes, Aunt Bab was standing beside her, fully dressed, and in a state

of injured indignation. The clock down-stairs was just striking half-past six — time for Maddy to be starting for the train to town. Jane sprang up in dismay.

“I’ve overslept!” she cried. “Why, Aunt Bab, what made you let me? It was after five when I went to sleep, and I had no idea of taking such a nap! Is Maddy down-stairs?”

“Maddy’s gone,” said Aunt Bab, with her head in the air. “I don’t approve of Maddy. She would n’t eat the flapjacks that I fried myself, and she said the coffee was muddy. She was down when I went out. I heard her go out of her room, and I went along to tell her you’d be down to get breakfast, but she would n’t let me call you. She said she did n’t care for anything, and she was in a hurry, so she drank the coffee and went off; and I think it’s pretty doings. She would n’t tell me where she was last night, either. I told you she’d get back all right, but that did n’t matter. You don’t neither of you take any stock in what I say!”

“Gone!” said Jane with a troubled face. “Why, it’s barely time now. She never went so early before. Oh, why *did n’t* you speak to me,

Aunty? I would n't have had her get off for anything, without saying good-morning at least. Did she seem just as usual?"

"She seemed very high and mighty, if that 's just as usual," said Aunt Bab emphatically. "'Pride goeth before a haughty spirit,' and so I told her. She would n't have lunch either. It was only a quarter-past six when she went. She wanted to get into the air, she said, and she did n't care if you were n't down; she did n't mind about not seeing you. And she poked the flapjacks off her plate and called them a mess, just as if I had n't fried flapjacks before she ever saw any. Maddy 's a top-lifted, high-minded Midianite, and she 'll find that the sinners in Zion are afraid, before she gets through." With which objurgation Aunt Bab seated herself with a jerk and folded her arms, adding after a moment, with intense solemnity, "Besides, beauty is skin deep, as I often say, and I don't consider that she takes after the Dunbars anyhow!"

"So she just went away without lunch or anything," said Jane, too much disturbed to think of calming her aunt's perturbed feelings, as usual. "I 'm so sorry. Did she—did she seem well?"

Had she been crying, Aunt Bab? Maddy was so—tired, last night.”

“She seemed better than her deserts,” said the indignant old lady; “and as for crying, *she* was n’t the one to cry. It was n’t *her* breakfast that was grumbled about, as if I could n’t get it as well as you could, Jane Dunbar. Mrs. North came out to see her when she went down the steps, and she stayed and talked a minute. Mrs. North says she was glad we let you sleep, and Maddy says it was the best thing for you, she was sure; and so she went off. Maddy’s very trying to live with, I think. I feel real pale after being talked to so. Well, we spend our years, and such is life, and the fool knoweth his own folly.”

Jane went down-stairs with the pain at her heart only the sharper for Maddy’s evident desire to avoid her.

“If she only knew how much I want to help her!” she thought, with tears in her eyes. “I must run over to Mrs. North when Aunt Bab is asleep and tell her all about it. She can help the child if anybody can, and I must n’t mind not being the one to do it myself.”

Mrs. North’s pretty parlor was all aglow with

dancing fire-light, and bright with flowers, as Jane went into it a few hours later. It seemed as if sorrow and perplexity could never have entered the place; and the low easy-chair which the pretty old lady pushed forward for her visitor was like a haven of rest, as she sank into it. There was a new occupant of the room this morning; and Jane's tired eyes brightened involuntarily at sight of him,—a rosy, brown-eyed child, who lay on the hearth-rug, basking in the warmth, and making himself at home in a manner calculated to win the heart of any woman who looked at him.

“It must be little Teddy!” cried Jane, almost forgetting her own trouble in the sudden pleasure. “Mr. North told me about him. And so you really have him here!” She went over and knelt down beside him, smiling into the little round face that looked up so brightly. The child put out his hand and touched hers after a moment, laughing as she patted his own in return.

“I like you,” he said. “I think I like you *best*. You’re little enough to play with, and I shall play hide-and-seek with you when you come to see me. What is your name?”

“Jane,” said the little woman, with her tender

smile. "And if you are going to stay here—O Mrs. North! could n't he call me Aunt Jane? You don't know how I should like it."

She stooped and kissed the laughing lips, and the boy threw his arms around her neck with the childish instinct of friendship which so seldom chooses the wrong object.

"Yes, I 'm going to call you Aunt Jane," he said. "And I 'll come and see you whenever you want me to. I wish you would stay here all the time. It 's nice here. In the hospital it was so big and bare, and in the boarding-house it was so little, and I could n't play outside the room, and mamma was sick, so. Besides, she has seed-cakes in the dining-room. May I get her one?" he demanded suddenly, sitting up and addressing Mrs. North, with a benevolent glance at Jane. "And then I could have another, too, to keep her company. Mamma wanted me to keep her company when that lady sent her the oranges that other time she was sick."

Mrs. North laughed and nodded, and the little fellow ran away, coming back presently with one of the coveted delicacies in each hand, and climbed calmly into Jane's lap to eat his own

share. "He 's a dear little fellow," said Mrs. North, looking benignantly at the new friends as they sat opposite her, "and he slept on the lounge in my room as good as a kitten last night, though David does say I ought n't to have the care of him so. It 's pleasant to have a child in the house, and it will do us all good, I am sure. And now what did you want to tell me, my dear? for you are waiting to ask about something, I know. Was it about your sister? You must n't be too troubled about her, though it was n't strange you were frightened last night. Come, tell me all about it, and Teddy shall run out to Bridget if you like."

But Teddy clung to Jane with both arms and declined to get down from her lap. "It feels homesick out there," he remarked solemnly. "Besides, I want to be with somebody little now. Everybody else is so tall, and my mamma is little, and *she* 's little. I want to stay here."

Jane put both arms about the child and held him close, with a new sense of comfort in her heart. It was pleasant to be "liked best," even by a child.

"Let him stay, please," she said. "He won't

understand, and I like to have him so. You don't know how long it is since I've had a child in my lap — not since Maddy was a little girl."

So the talk went on in Teddy's presence, while he ate his cakes and patted Jane's cheeks and played with the one little worn gold ring on her hand, — her mother's wedding-ring. The half-hour which she had meant to spend away from home had extended into an hour before the story was all told, and Mrs. North had comforted and advised and sympathized, and promised "to talk to Maddy" that very night.

"You must n't be too troubled," she said again as Jane rose to go away, with a guilty thought of Aunt Bab, who must be awake and mournful long ago. "Keep your patience, dear, and wait. What's that my David says so often? 'All things come round to him who will but wait,' and you'll find that Maddy's got a heart full of love for you underneath these flighty ways, if you can just give the noble part of her time to work its way out through this outside that is n't really herself, but something caught from that foolish boy. I think perhaps it's true that some one a good deal older can help her best, just now, and you are

wise to make up your mind not to say much to her. I 'll do my best to help you, dear, and you 'll be happier than ever, you and Maddy, yet: just like the old song, 'The falling out of faithful friends renewing is of love!'" She laughed as she spoke, a tender, loving laugh which seemed like a sort of blessing. "This is the time for what Charles Wesley calls the patience of hope," she went on, kissing the little dressmaker good-by at the door, while Teddy clung to her hand and begged her to come again. "You 've had the 'labor of love' part all your life, Jane dear, and now God gives you the chance to finish out the line and find the way into his own joy, that only comes where people can trust him and stand still to see his salvation, even when they 're anxious enough to be ready to plunge into the very middle of the battle."

Jane put out her hand and clasped her friend's a moment, clinging to it in her gentle, childish way. "I 'll try," she said simply ; "that 's what I need to learn, I know — and then I sha'n't worry Maddy by being too fussy toward her. And oh, I 'm so glad that you don't think too badly of the poor child! I could n't bear to have her lose

the happy times she always has with you — and Mr. North. Good-by, and good-by to you, little Teddy. Come and see me soon."

"I will!" shouted the boy, dancing on the door-step, as Jane stepped in at her own door. "I'll come to-day. I like you best, Aunt Jane."

Mrs. North stood a few moments near the window, until the sound of the sewing-machine was heard from the four-room cottage — a steady, humming noise, regular as if the worker had nothing on her mind beyond the stitching of seams and the laying of box-plaits in Bridget's Sunday frock. There was a cloud over the listener's face as she watered her roses, and she shook her head more than once at her work.

"Poor child, poor child!" she said under her breath; and Teddy watching her from the other side of the room thought that this new "Grandma" must be a very strange old lady to talk to roses "as if they was babies."

CHAPTER XVI.

MARRIED.

WHAT a strange, long day it was for Jane and Aunt Bab! The old lady looked curiously at her niecee as hour after hour slipped by almost in silence, while the needle flew and the work progressed under the busy fingers. Jane was thinking very hard about something.

“She looks as if she was praying,” said Aunt Bab, with unwonted penetration; “and if that’s so, I’d better keep still. Repenting of sins is n’t to be interrupted. I knew she’d be sorry for leaving me alone so long. Jane’s got a good heart if she is thoughtless sometimes.”

Accordingly the old lady sat quietly beside the window and bowed with grace and dignity when Jane tried to rouse herself into conversation lest her relative should be lonely.

“Need n’t talk,” said Aunt Bab impressively. “Folks want to meditate sometimes, and it always does ‘em good. I’m meditating too. I’m thinking that Maddy may want those flapjacks some-

time, and not be able to get 'em. It ain't you I 'm thinking about, and you need n't be afraid I can't make allowances for you. You 're a good girl, and I 'm willing to overlook it, and while the lamp holds out to burn, you know, though not meaning to say that you 're the vilest sinner, which I never did and never will, so you 'd better think about what we are going to have for supper."

And Jane went on with her work, grateful for the unwonted consideration, and with the quiet, earnest look in her eyes which had been growing there ever since she came in from Mrs. North's and settled down to think over the machine. She even sang a little during the afternoon, and Aunt Bab echoed the queer, old-fashioned, winding tune from the other side of the room — the same words over and over: —

“ Oh, that each in the day
Of his coming may say,
I have fought my way through;
I have finished the work thou didst give me to do!”

and then softly, with tender, prayerful eyes, —

“ By the patience of hope and the labor of love.”

It was just growing dusk, and the flying fingers were idle for a moment before taking up the white knitting-work, when the door opened softly and Miss Wyman and Mrs. North came in together. They had found the latch unfastened, and their knock had been drowned in the last clatter of the treadle. A rosy, mischievous face peeped out from behind Mrs. North's skirt; and as they came in, Teddy broke from her and ran to spring into Jane's lap with an exultant laugh.

She stood up to receive her guests with him still in her arms, smiling over the dark, curly head. "I'm so glad —" she began; and then stopped short, turning suddenly pale. What was it — that startled look in both faces? Miss Wyman had an evening paper in her hand. Jane remembered, strangely, that she had heard a newsboy's cry a little before. How pale Mrs. North was! She put Teddy down gently, and stood grasping at the machine for support, as Miss Wyman came over and put both arms around her. The room whirled about her, and her heart beat wildly with a sudden agony of fear. What were they saying? How far away their voices were, and how dull her own sounded as she tried to cry out, "What is it?"

“O my dear!” cried Mrs. North, “don’t look so frightened. Indeed, it is n’t the worst! Clariissa, give her the paper. She does n’t take it in. Jane, Jane, dear! sit down and look for yourself. She’s not dead, indeed, she’s not dead. Did n’t you hear what we said? Oh, poor child!”

For Jane had caught at the newspaper, glanced at it for one moment in the fading light, and then sank quietly down on the floor at Aunt Bab’s feet, crushing it in her hand as she fell. The frightened old lady took it up and spread it out on her lap a little later when the lamp was lighted and they were dashing cold water over the white, unconscious face. She read over and over the first words on which her eyes rested, repeating them aloud with bewildered, helpless sobbing: —

“MARRIED. — At ten A.M., at the house of Rev. Mr. Dawes, Frederick Carling to Madeline Grace Dunbar, all of this city.”

“I don’t understand!” wailed Aunt Bab pitifully; but Jane did not hear the cry, and there was no one to answer.

“Maddy was gone.” Jane said the words over and over to herself, during the next day or two, while she lay weak and exhausted from the sudden

blow, looking with sleepless eyes through dark mists of troubled thought, and yearning with pain unspeakable after the darling of her heart who had cast her aside. They had set the door of the pink and white chamber open, that the air might come more freely to the smaller room behind it, and the elder sister saw, with dumb anguish, the familiar dainty coloring, the pillow where Maddy's shining head had lain, the table that held her little books, and all the pretty arrangements, planned so lovingly in the summer days that seemed so long ago. A great storm had begun on the evening when the news had come; and Jane could see the flakes whirling wildly past the window, as if in sympathy with the confusion of thought which went on within her own brain.

Miss Wyman, and even Mrs. North, wondered a little to see her so quiet. They would have wondered more, if they could have looked beneath the calm outside and caught a glimpse of the torrent of thought and feeling which was raging there. Love and grief and anger were tearing the usually gentle heart. It was no wonder that, when at last the storm grew calm, she was white

and trembling as if after a long illness; quite a different woman from the one who had sung so softly over her work on that afternoon of tender thought and hope. With the breaking forth of the wintry sun, Jane rose quietly from her bed and went down to take up the work which lay ready for her, and to enter once more on the life-path where there was only Aunt Bab now to guide and help. There was a shadow in the eyes that tried to smile away Aunt Bab's feeble complaining, and an undertone of sadness in the voice that faltered in the attempt to talk as usual. Even when, as days went by, the old habit of looking for the best began to reassert itself, and Aunt Bab could compliment her niece on being able to "get over" things so quickly, pointing to herself as an example of those natures to whom a grief once is a grief always, and mixing up the long-lost Jonathan and Maddy, with tears of self-pity, those in Barton Square who had learned to care for Jane Dunbar could see a change that remained during the passing weeks and months. She was a little quieter; a little less childlike in her happy talk over neighborhood matters and spring sewing; and at times there was a wistful

look in the soft gray eyes, which had never been there before that troubled wedding-day. She seldom spoke of Maddy, and seemed to wish to put out of sight of those about her the inward longing which was never quite subdued. Only when, a few days after the girl's disappearance, a note came from "Mrs. Frederick Carling," requesting that her clothes be delivered to the expressman, who would call for them, and taking a formal farewell of her sister with an intimation that it was better for them both to part, Jane broke out into passionate grief and indignation, tearing the letter across, with hasty, trembling fingers.

"She did n't even write it herself!" she cried. "He persuaded her; I know it! Maddy could never have written me a note like that! She loves me underneath it all, and she 'll be sorry and want me, and he 'll keep us apart! Oh, it 's wicked! wicked! and I can't bear it! How could she treat me so!"

But she packed the trunk carefully, and added to her sister's possession the old-fashioned brooch, with a cherub's head looking out from a wreath of twisted gold, which she had laid aside long ago

against the time when "mother's baby" should be a woman. "Perhaps it may make her heart turn back to us," she said, with hot tears dropping on the box as she closed it. "I always used to think that Maddy should have it if she married. Mother wore it on her wedding-day."

She wrote a little note before the trunk went away, and laid it in the tray where Maddy could not fail to see it, — a loving, sorrowful little letter, blotted with tears.

"I have always loved you with all my heart," she said in it, "and I love you now just the same, Maddy, though it seems as if my heart was broken. And if ever you want me, you must send for me, or come to me, and remember that I am always your sister, ready to help you all I can. God bless you, dear, and give you a happy life!"

No answer was ever received, and it was long months before Jane caught a glimpse of her little sister again.

Mrs. North and Miss Wyman held many consultations with regard to their friend during that sorrowful springtime, setting themselves to drive away the lingering sadness which would show itself, in spite of her brave efforts to hide it, and

growing fonder of her with every new deed of thoughtfulness, after the manner of generous and helpful souls. There were visits with the pretty old lady oftener than ever now, either at Number 15 or at the cottage, until Jane could not spend an evening alone without feeling that a knock at her door might at any moment announce the entrance of Mrs. North or David, to bear her away to share their home reading, while Aunt Bab nodded in the chimney-corner, or to keep her company with cheery talk, which set the shadows flying and left her smiling as they went away. There were discussions, the planting of seeds in the tiny bit of ground attached to Jane's mansion, and the interested watching of the little crop of mignonette, morning-glories, and sweet peas; and there were prayer-meeting evenings when Mrs. North insisted on taking the place of Aunt Bab's confidant, and sending the younger woman away to "get the good" of the pleasant service, with David to call for her on her way home. Miss Wyman brought work, which led to long discussions and more than one expedition to the Kitchen-garden, where the children were being fitted out with calico frocks as a reward for the

winter's industry. Jane's neighborly services were called into action now and again in preparation for the evening companies at the great house, and on several occasions Miss Wyman descended on the four-roomed cottage, and persuaded the busy dressmaker to lay aside her work and come out with "Cousin Dick" and herself for a long drive through the lovely country that lay beyond city and suburbs.

"It 's just wonderful," said the humble little woman to herself, "that they should be so good to me. I must n't ever let myself seem lonely in spite of it all. If I were only braver! God help me, and God bless them!"

But, after all, it was David North who first found the surest way to bring help and comfort to the troubled heart which he understood so well. "It is n't just things to take up her mind that she needs," he said thoughtfully, one evening, standing in the bay-window and looking out toward the next door, from whence the sound of Jane's machine came faintly through the stillness. "No, it is n't just that; and kindness alone won't cure that heartache, mother. Poor child! one can see it in her eyes whenever she 's unconscious, though

she is so bright when she 's talking, and tries to cover it up so from us all. I don't believe Jane Dunbar could be quite happy ever if she had n't somebody to love and look out for and devote herself to, as she always has to Maddy. Mother!"

Mrs. North looked up inquiringly from her knitting.

"I 'm going to get her to take Teddy," said David, coming over to the table and sitting down as if prepared for a discussion. "I have thought about it for some time, and it seems to me that is just what she needs."

"But, my dear," said his mother doubtfully, "she 's so busy. Why, what made you think of such a thing, David? To be sure, she and Teddy are so fond of each other, and he 's always running away to see her — but then there 's Aunt Bab, and Jane with so much work on her hands — why, how could she manage? I really think it might be a pleasure to her, but"—

"We should be here to help her if she needed help," said David, "and Aunt Bab would n't interfere. She likes Teddy herself, though she does call him giddy. I think she would probably help take care of him and save Jane a good

deal of trouble, besides being brighter for it herself; and, as for the work, why, she would n't need to work quite so hard with what I should pay her for Teddy's board and care; and this would be pleasanter work for her, you know. I will tell her that it is too much for you to have the responsibility, as it is. It will be better all round, and you will have the pleasure of the young man's company just as you do now. I think it will help Jane Dunbar—and I would give a good deal to help her."

He looked steadily down at the table, as he spoke, tracing the pattern of the table-cover with a paper-cutter which he had picked up.

"She would n't be so tied down to that endless sewing, anyhow," he said. "She has never had a chance to do as she liked, mother, and it would make her happy to have a child in her care again. I may never have the chance to make her happy in any other way."

There was a moment's silence before Mrs. North answered. Then she came around to her son's side and kissed him gently.

"I think you are right, Davy," she said softly. "It is the one way for you to help her without

drawing her away from what God has given her to do. Dear little Jane! I love her very much, David."

"Thank you," said David a little hoarsely. "We need n't talk about it, mother, for I know it would be of no use to say anything to her, of course. Only you 'll understand how much I should like to help her with her burden. There! suppose we go over there now and stop that eternal machine, and tell her about it."

And so, with wonder and delight on Jane's part, rapture on Teddy's, and grave pleasure on that of "the conductor with the rose," the new arrangement was effected, and the four-roomed cottage became vocal with a small boy's shouts and laughter and pleasant with the sound of pattering feet, and the sight of a rosy, laughing face, which called forth answering smiles from Aunt Bab herself, and brought sunshine with it to the eyes of loving "Auntie Jane."

"It was nothing less than an inspiration in David," said Miss Wyman, watching approvingly. "Teddy 's an effervescent sort of medicine, but he is doing the work, and we 'll all give him credit for it—and David. Poor David!" And the

wise “fairy godmother” fell into a reverie, knitting her brows and gazing out of her window at the fountain in the Square, as if it could tell her the answer to some vexed problem.

“If there was any way to make things straight for them,” she sighed; “but the way seems marked out for them, and they must just go on and follow it through, as some of the rest of us have done. Well, they ’ll find flowers growing on the roughest road, if they keep their eyes open, and that ’s what little Jane has done all her life; watched for pleasantness and found it, though it was n’t for herself, dear child. Well—the Lord knows best for them as well as for me, and I ’ve no need to meddle.”

The summer slipped by, fair and still, with all its wealth of bloom and bird song and sunshine. Teddy rolled and tumbled in the grass of the Square, walked the edge of the fountain and fell in, tried to climb trees and split his jackets in the attempt, performed impossible gymnastic feats with chairs and tables in Jane’s parlor, sighed for “base ball,” and otherwise developed into a true boy, with lapses into babyhood at twilight, and on occasions when even a boy, on the verge of

knickerbockers, feels the need of petting and comforting. Aunt Bab rocked and crooned and told her wandering stories, and claimed her niece's attention by day and night; and Jane's heart and hands were filled with loving work and thought for both, which left little room for brooding over inner troubles. Jane had never heard that tender "Song of the Mill" which holds such a wealth of life's wisdom in its streaming melody, but she might have sung it with all her heart, in these busy days: —

"Winding and grinding, work through the day;
Grief never minding; grind it away:
What though tears dropping, rust as they fall ?
Have no wheel stopping; work comforts all."

How could she pause to weep over the sudden thought of Maddy's lovely face as it rose between her and her sewing, when Teddy's arms were about her neck with a coaxing request for a song or a story, or an intimation that it was two hours since he had had anything to eat, and that there were plenty of doughnuts in the pantry, for he had just looked to see? Or, if thoughts, half sweet, half bitter, came sometimes at twilight or with the sound of David North's footsteps passing

swiftly by in the evening shadows — thoughts of vanishing youth, and crowding cares, and the shadow of loneliness to come in later years, mingled with the memory of kindly eyes and strong hands ready to help her own weakness, and of a grave, gentle voice that had once spoken comforting words and called her “dear” as if she had been a child, — if such half-defined reveries ever flitted through her mind, there was Aunt Bab to break in with a tearful complaint of Jane’s silence, recalling her to the duty of sympathizing and cheering, and bringing her to herself with a guilty start and inward laughing wonder at her own foolishness.

CHAPTER XVII.

A DAY ON THE WATER.

NO one ever mentioned Maddy's name now; though little Teddy in the evening prayers, which Jane had taught him, always said "God bless Aunt Jane's little sister and make her happy." The child had asked many questions at first about her, and Jane had told him stories of the pretty baby for whom she had cared as a child, and of the fair little girl who had been the pet of the old home; but such stories were apt to end in silent weeping, and Teddy had learned not to call for them. There were plenty of other tales to be had without the accompaniment of tears; and "Dame Crump" was much more entertaining than a baby who was "only a girl," anyhow.

"I suppose anybody might think we had all forgotten about her," said Jane wistfully to herself, on the golden August morning that marked the anniversary of her first visit to Barton Square. "Poor little Maddy! Dear little Maddy! How pretty she looked that night when I went home,

and how pleased she was to come out here! Well — I can't forget, at any rate, though I can't talk about her either. If I could only know that she is happy, at least."

She twisted a spray of morning-glory absently between her fingers for more than one idle minute, as she stood on her doorstep, forgetful of the morning's work to be done, and the preparations for a picnic which had filled the house with unwonted excitement on the evening before. Aunt Bab, buttering biscuit in the kitchen, called to her without being heard, and Teddy came out to the door and regarded her with his head on one side, deciding mentally that Aunt Jane looked worried, and would be very likely to watch him on the boat much more closely than he wished. Teddy put on an expression of saintlike meekness to allay her fears, and formed a silent resolution to keep close by Uncle David from the time of starting until they came home.

"She 'll think I 'm all safe if I 'm with him," said the scheming young man within himself, "and if I can't go up on that hurricane deck I shall just give up. Say, Auntie Jane, I ain't going to get into any mischief all day. I 'm a

great deal carefuller than I used to be before I was going out of kilts next month, did you know that?"

Jane gave a little start and laugh, putting away her thoughts as usual, and smiling a bright good-morning as Mr. North came out of his door and made some remark on the beauty of the morning and the delight of a holiday. He picked a white rose and leaned across to lay it in Jane's hand, with an inquiring look which showed that he had caught the fleeting sadness in her face.

"Thank you," said Jane with another smile; "I'll wear it in my button-hole as if I were a girl again, and it will make me quite fine for the boat. No; please don't look troubled, Mr. North. There 's nothing the matter, only a little wondering and thinking, that I ought to be ashamed of, this beautiful morning. Is n't it a day to be happy in, and is n't it pleasant that we can all go, even Aunt Bab? And oh, hark! she 's calling me this minute. I do declare, I 've been standing here doing nothing as if my lunch was all packed, and I had the morning to get ready in, instead of only an hour before the boat goes."

"I wish you 'd let me share in the wondering

and thinking, now and then," said David. "I wish I could answer all the questions, and provide pleasant things to think about for the next half-century. There! is n't that a wild flight of fancy in a sober old railroad man? Well, to come down to practical matters, I 'll take that small brownie off your hands for the rest of the day, as far as care goes, if you 'll please send him over here. He 's just as well out of your way while you are getting ready; and you shall have all the time for dreaming that you want to-day, if you will only dream pleasant dreams."

"Oh, thank you," said Jane again. "Run along, Teddy, and be good. He *is* good, generally, you know"—as Teddy disappeared in a hasty search for fishing-lines. "Teddy minds, if he is rather lively. He 's such a dear boy, Mr. North!"

"I know," responded David, with an amused smile. "I hear his praises from mother and Miss Wyman, you know, as well as from you. Well, he ought to be good if ever a child should be, with all the care and thought that you give him. I expect to be very proud of him some day, though at present I 'm so occupied in wondering at his

capabilities for mischief, that I don't always quite see all his virtues."

"I hope you *will* be proud of him!" cried Jane, stooping to kiss the little fellow as he ran past her again. "If I can only help to make him what he ought to be for you! *Teddy, Teddy, child!* What are you doing with my white yarn? Don't you know that you can't fish with that? Do please give it to Uncle David; and, O Mr. North! would n't you be so kind as to give him some twine instead? *I must go.*"

"Yes, you 'd better," remarked Teddy sententiously, as the white ball was removed from his grasp. "Aunt Bab 's crying all over the biscuit because you ain't there, and she 's saying, man is born to trouble like everything, and"— But Jane had already vanished into the house, and his sentence was never finished.

What a joyous cavalcade it was that left the Square a little later! Aunt Bab on David's arm, very prim and self-conscious in her purple hat and green shawl; Mrs. North and Jane walking a little in advance, deep in consultation over the joint lunch which was packed in the great basket that David carried; and Teddy hopping and

jumping on all sides, and shouting an exultant “Good-by,” and “Don’t you wish you was going?” to the small boys of the Square. A holiday was so rare to all the party, that they were like a company of children together, and Aunt Bab spoke for them all, when she said with intense earnestness on approaching the boat, “There’s a time to dance.”

“If only Clarissa could have felt like going too!” said Mrs. North, with a saddening of her beautiful eyes, as they swung out into the bay. “Poor Clarissa! She’ll miss her cousin all the rest of her life, they’ve always been such friends!”

A shadow fell over the other happy faces at remembrance of the sorrow that had come to their friend within the last few days. It had only been a week since Jane had seen the handsome old gentleman standing on Miss Wyman’s steps and bowing in his stately way to his cousin as she watched him off from the door. She had looked after him with a grateful thought of the kindness that he had often shown her, as he went away, and had said to herself how pleasant it seemed that he and Miss Wyman should have kept such



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a close friendship all their lives, and that they should be left to each other now that all their kindred were gone. And two days later had come the news of Mr. Wyman's sudden death. Poor Miss Wyman! How desolate the great family mansion must seem to her now, as she sat there alone, the last of her line! It seemed almost wrong to be happy when one she loved was suffering so; but Jane put the qualm of conscience aside with an instinctive consciousness that her friend herself would have wished it to be so. It seemed much more natural somehow, to think of life and joy, than of death, with that world of sparkling waters around them, and with such a fresh, sweet wind "ruffling up the edges of the sea," and whispering of gladness with every breath. What a beautiful world it was, and how much happiness there was everywhere! The voices of laughing children were all about them, and the whole boat was full of joyous hearts, or so it seemed to Jane, as she sat "dreaming her pleasant dreams," and drinking in the beauty of sky and sea as the boat sped through the shining waves.

"The glad part *is* the true part, and it 's the

glad part of our lives that will last longest," she said to herself with eyes that glowed and darkened as the thought grew in her mind. "Yes, it's the happiness of our lives that will live forever; there won't be any losing each other, or misunderstanding each other, or being left alone, when we are all immortal together. Miss Wyman will have her friends again, and I shall have my little Maddy, and nothing can come between us — and it's only waiting a little first."

She looked up at Mrs. North with an unconscious appeal for sympathy; and the pretty old lady smiled back with misty eyes as if she could read the thoughts that were falling like dew upon her mind.

"I always want to be quiet on the water," said Mrs. North softly. "It's a long time since I have been in a boat now, and I always think of my dear boys at such times. It seems as if they might be in any of those little white sailboats, coming out of that patch of blue sky, just as I saw them sail away. See how they skim along like white birds — like Isaiah, you know: 'Who are these that fly . . . as doves to their windows?' Do you know, when I am on the water now, I can't

help saying over and over that line that my husband was so fond of — he always read so many books, you know — the line that stayed in my mind all that hard time when my boys left me: ‘The dear might of Him that walked the waves.’ It’s wonderful how it comforted me then, and how sweet it is to me now. There! David is coming down from the hurricane deck with Teddy, and we won’t talk about it. Dear boy! I don’t want to make him sad.”

“‘He bringeth them to their desired haven,’ ” whispered Jane, still watching the far-off, vanishing ships; and the two sat silent, only smiling a little as David came up to them with the child clinging to his hand.

“What have they been talking about?” said the man to himself. “If ever I saw peace in two faces, it is there. How well they suit each other!” He sighed slightly as if there were something beyond pleasure in the thought, but immediately afterward, seeing a warning expression of neglected merit in Aunt Bab’s countenance, sat down beside her and talked to the old lady in such an entertaining manner that the other two women were left to their own quiet happiness for at least

half an hour longer than could have been expected.

“You’re a very pretty behaved young man,” said the old lady, with melancholy graciousness, “and I often tell Jane that if you had n’t such a high nose, and your beard was n’t so bushy, and you did n’t have that lock of hair that stands up on your head, you’d be quite like a friend of mine that I used to know. I don’t know as you ever heard of him — Jonathan Green. But then, it ain’t your fault that you ain’t handsome, and I don’t draw any comparisons. Beauty is but skin deep anyhow, and a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush.” And Aunt Bab waved the knitting-work which she had insisted on bringing, in an unwonted spasm of industry, and looked the picture of dignified condescension.

The morning on the bay had been beautiful; but as the boat steamed up to the wharf that evening, with the sky all in a rosy flush, and the water so still that the very stars were shining there through pink and amber clouds as if it had been a second heaven, it seemed to Jane that the world was lovelier still. The very city seemed glorified in that tender light, with the church

spires standing out so darkly and clearly against the delicately tinted sky, where soft waves of color seemed pulsing up as if the hidden heart of day were beating with love and sweetness under the eyes of heaven. What a time of rest and peace it had been, and how the memory of it would come back to her in the days of work to follow! Jane was smiling down at Teddy as they left the boat, and looking up with amused interest at a minute fish which he brandished proudly at the end of a bit of twine, when some one brushed against her in the crowd, causing her to look up carelessly and then grow suddenly pale and spring forward. Was it—yes, it surely was—Maddy, on her husband's arm, gazing at her with wide, half-frightened eyes, and putting out both hands with an involuntary gesture of gladness. Jane took in the little action at a flash, and hurried toward her with a cry of “Maddy! Maddy!” but the next moment Mr. Carling had caught sight of her, and his brow had darkened with an angry frown. It was all over in a minute. Maddy was swept away in the crowd, her husband speaking to her hastily, some words that brought a scarlet flush to her cheeks, startling her sister with the conscious-

ness of how pale she had been before. She looked back over her shoulder as Jane stopped short in her attempt to reach her, an expression in her eyes that haunted her sister for many days with a wonder as to its meaning. Was it love and longing and entreaty? Was Maddy wanting her and trying to speak to her without words, or was it all a fancy? Jane turned the question over and over in her mind many times afterwards; but now she only stood gazing after her sister with a dull, stunned feeling of loss and separation that seemed almost unbearable. The others had passed on without noticing her pause; and for one dreary instant, as she stood alone in the throng, a sense of utter desolation and loneliness, such as she had never known before, and never forgot afterwards, swept over her. Was this the end of all the love that had been flowing out for twenty years toward her little sister? Was it really "all over" between them? Jane lifted a pair of stricken, lusterless eyes as David North came back to her.

"Did you see?" she said dully. "She—she 's gone. I could n't stop her."

"I saw," he answered with stern lips. "Take

my arm, Miss Jane. Let me take you to my mother. You are shivering. Put this shawl about you. Try not to think about it. I don't think it was her doing."

"I—I think I would rather nobody knew about it," said Jane falteringly. "If Mrs. North did n't see her—somehow I did n't think Maddy would have passed me so—when I tried—do you think anybody else noticed?"

David shook his head, with pitying eyes. "We won't speak of it," he said gently. "My mother was looking the other way. Just try to forget it, though I know that is hard advice to give. If I could only help you!"

Jane only answered by a grateful look as they came up with the others. She was very silent on the way home, but nobody seemed to notice. It was a blessing that Aunt Bab was nodding in the corner of her seat in the car, and that Mrs. North was so interested in what David was saying. How could she have borne to talk to anybody? She must have a little time to recover herself and take new heart again for the days to come. How strangely the sky had darkened since that lovely sunset! It seemed a long time ago that all the

world had looked so beautiful to her. "Well," she repeated to herself, "it 's true, all the same, that there 's happiness beyond it all, and I must n't lose my courage."

But when, after seeing his mother to her door, David North came back to Jane as she stood at her gate, and looked anxiously into her face without speaking, the grief and longing found words at last.

"She 's my only sister," said Jane with trembling lips; "my only sister, and all I have; and I shall never have her again. I 'm alone in the world now that Maddy 's lost to me."

David turned away suddenly with a sound that was almost like a sob.

"Alone? O Jane! Jane!" he cried, and hurried off without even a good-night. But somehow Jane felt less forsaken as she went into the house.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A CONFIDENCE.

I KNOW what 's the matter with him as well as if he had told me," soliloquized Miss Wyman, as she sat in her library window one Sunday afternoon, gazing across the Square; "that is, if I 'm not mistaken in the very foundation of the matter, and he does n't care for Jane at all! But then, I 'm not. She 's just the sort of woman for him to fall in love with. David North never could care for anybody that he could n't take care of, and I always said there was no danger of his throwing himself away on that independent gypsy of a Maddy."

She leaned out a little from the window to look toward Number 15, where David could be plainly seen sitting with his mother on the doorsteps, while Teddy scrambled around and over him with an occasional dart into the cottage for a visit to Auntie Jane.

"Jane is n't there," said the "fairy godmother," with as near an approach to grimness

as lay in Miss Wyman's power to exhibit. "Of course, as it 's such a delicious afternoon, and very likely the last of the season, Aunt Bab would be attacked with the blues — or the purples, properly, considering that Aunt Bab is never anything but blue — and she is probably given up to melancholy in the chimney corner, and Jane is sitting there, reading the Bible or singing hymns as she was that Sunday when I called for her to go to missionary meeting and found Aunt Bab reproving her for choosing such a light-minded tune as 'Sometimes a Light surprises,' and asking for 'This World cannot please Me.' And there is David fidgeting because she does n't come out, and making up his mind to rout out the old lady, and then settling down and telling himself that he must keep away more! I know him!"

The beautiful brown water spaniel who lay at his mistress's feet rose slowly and put one silky paw on her black gown, laying his head beside it and gazing upward with liquid, earnest eyes that seemed to claim a share in the conversation. Miss Wyman laid her hand on him and went on speaking absently.

"No, you need n't look so sad, Wat. There 's

nothing on *your* mind. What do you know about David North and poor little Jane, and what light have you to throw on the question? I 've no doubt you think just as he does, that it would only make the poor child unhappy to know that he cares for her, when she 's likely to be tied down to her aunt for half a lifetime, and there could n't be any hope of marrying for years and years, and she past thirty already! Unhappy! Much a man knows about us women — that is, most men!"

Her hands dropped in her lap again, and she raised her head slightly to look up at a portrait that had been hung opposite the window during the last few days, the face of the handsome, erect old man, Miss Wyman's comrade and friend, who had left her for "the High Countries" a fortnight before. His cousin gazed long and earnestly at the portrait now, with lips that trembled and eyes that were misty and yet glad. She rose at last and went close to the painting, looking up at it with a questioning, doubtful face as it hung above her head. Poor little Miss Wyman! what a contrast there had always been between her and her lifelong friend. Her black dress seemed somehow

to make her appear even smaller and more bent than usual, and the hair that clustered about her forehead was growing white very fast. The face in the picture looked younger than hers, in spite of its snowy locks. Mr. Richard Wyman had always seemed young for his years, young and handsome. Clarissa smiled sorrowfully as she gazed at the portrait.

"There never was anybody else like you, Dick," she murmured. "Nobody else in the world would have done as you did. I wish you were here to tell me what to do!" She paused a moment, and then went on thoughtfully. "I think you would rather have me help him, dear," she said lingeringly, half aloud. "If you could teach him what you knew yourself without teaching—you would rather have me tell him. David is n't like other people. I *could* tell him, for he will understand, and it is the only way I can speak to him. I can't bear to have him unhappy, and to have my brave little Jane miss the comfort that I had, when it is so close to her. Yes, I think you would rather have me tell him, and I will."

She turned away from the portrait and walked

about the room for a few minutes as if thinking, while Wat followed, looking curiously into her face and giving expression to his feelings by a low whine, as a few tears rolled down his mistress's cheeks. It was a relief to his mind when she took up a fleecy white shawl from the sofa and made ready to leave the house. Wat would have preferred to see the bonnet and wrap which would have signified a longer expedition, but any out-of-door excursion was desirable on this beautiful day, and he frisked and barked with a total loss of dignity as the two left the house. Miss Wyman herself was not less changed in manner. Her face was bright and her voice clear as usual when she put out her hand to greet David as he opened Mrs. North's gate.

"I 've come after you, David," she said, with a good-afternoon to the pretty old lady. "I want you, if you will, to drive me out to Millbank to look after one of my children there, who was hurt in the factory a day or two ago. Foolish girl! She would leave the cooking-school to go to work there, and now she 's laid up for weeks, I suppose, and they 're poorer than poverty. I don't drive on Sunday, as a rule, but they sent me

word last night too late for me to go then, and I had let Robert go away to spend Sunday, anyhow. Will you go? It will keep you some time, and we sha'n't get home in time for evening church, but it won't trouble my conscience if it does n't yours, under the circumstances."

"Of course I will go," said David heartily. "Why, Miss Wyman, you know there's nothing I should enjoy more. Sit here with mother while I run over and harness the horse. Shall I ask Esther for your wraps? It may be chilly as we come home. Mother, you don't want anything first, do you?"

Mrs. North shook her head, smiling. "I shall go in and try to divert Aunt Bab," she said. "She is n't quite well, poor woman, and it weighs on her mind a little. Jane has been shut up with her all day, she was so afraid of catching more cold. Perhaps I can persuade the child to leave her with me and go to walk. I'm sure she needs it. Jane has been looking very pale these last few days."

A sudden thought seemed to strike Miss Wyman.

"Why should n't she go with us?" she sug-

gested. "It would be the very thing for her. Go on, David, and bring the phaeton as soon as you can. There's plenty of room, and we'll try to persuade her. There could n't be a lovelier evening for a drive, and very likely poor little Annie O'Brien will be glad enough to hear a hymn or two sung to quiet her. I'm glad you spoke of it, Mrs. North."

David hurried away with a brightening face; and the two women looked at each other with a little smile of understanding.

"Poor David!" said Mrs. North with a half sigh. "Clarissa, if it could have come about, it would have made me very happy, though nobody is quite good enough for him. I am very fond of Jane Dunbar. She seems almost like a daughter already, after only a year. I should have liked to see them happy."

"Do you think she understands?" asked Miss Wyman. "She seems perfectly unconscious, to me."

"I'm sure she does n't know that he cares for her," answered Mrs. North. "Sometimes I wish she did. It would be a comfort to her now. Clarissa, do you know that she met her sister face

to face the other day on the wharf, and that Maddy passed her by without speaking? David has been unhappy ever since, I can see, because he feels that he can't help her. They neither know that I saw, but my heart has ached for them both this week. If one only knew what was right to do!"

"If they did understand, you think it might be easier, then," said Miss Wyman. "I was thinking the same thing this afternoon. Perhaps — perhaps they will, soon."

"Hush!" said Mrs. North under her breath, as the sound of an opening door was heard, and Jane herself appeared on the cottage porch for a stolen breath of air, while Aunt Bab nodded in her chair. The little woman was looking pale and tired, as Mrs. North had said, but her face lighted up at sight of her friends, and she came over to the fence to say good-afternoon brightly, and remark on the beauty of the day — the very ideal of a September Sabbath.

"So lovely that we're going to run away with you in about ten minutes, to get all the good we can out of it, on the way to see a sick girl over in Millbank," said Miss Wyman with decision. "David has gone for the carriage, and you are to

go after your outside things and be back here by the time he comes. No, you need n't look alarmed and begin to say you can't. I know Aunt Bab has a cold, but here 's Mrs. North to sit with her and cheer her up; and though you may be a very efficient and charming young woman, Jane, you are n't equal to the 'pretty old lady' for cheering people. I don't suppose you will be till you get to be her age either, and you may as well give up and do as we tell you."

Mrs. North laughed and patted Clarissa's hand in an amused way. "You extravagant woman!" she said. "There, Jane, she is quite right about its being all settled that you are to go away and rest. You won't be fit to work to-morrow if you don't, and I shall really enjoy the quiet. Aunt Bab and I always get on beautifully, you know. Run along, child, and get ready, and I 'll come over immediately. Clarissa, we 'll sit on the steps over there, so as to hear her when she wakes up. You must hurry a little, Jane dear, and if you want a lunch — you don't have dinner as late as the rest of us, Sundays — you 'll have time, I should think."

But Jane had no desire for anything to eat. She went hastily away to prepare for the drive

with a face full of pleasure. It was such a beautiful day, and the time had seemed so long in the closed parlor! How soft and sweet the air was, even now, when the shadows were beginning to grow long, and sunlight was already deepening into the evening glory. They would have the sunset by the river, and it would be moonlight before they came back. And that winding, shaded road around Millbank hill, where the elms were scattering golden leaves, and the maples were already turning to bronze and red under the golden sunshine — where could a lovelier way have been found?

“It’s next best to going to church,” said Jane, fastening her shawl with a happy glance out of the window at the mellow, sunny sky; and she hummed softly to herself as she went downstairs, “Blest day of God, most calm, most bright” —

David was just driving up before the house; and it was only a minute before they were seated in the phaeton, and on their way toward the skirts of the town. Neither of the three was inclined to talk much. The afternoon was so beautiful that one felt like resting in all its loveliness,

drinking in the pure, soft air, and feasting the eyes on the deepening splendors of the young autumn; yellow fields, with stacks of hay or grain standing warm against the clear blue sky; bright flying leaves that whirled and darted like joyous thoughts of the stately trees; the low hills, green still, and touched with a faint rose flush that would deepen into crimson presently, when the sun sank out of sight; the river, calm and intensely blue, and the moon that hung like a pearly cloud, low in the eastern heavens.

“ ‘At eventide there shall be light,’ ” said Miss Wyman gently, at last; and the two beside her smiled at each other, as if they had no need of words to understand each other’s pleasure.

The sun had gone down in a glory of crimson light that spread from west to east, and then faded into amethyst, as if from joy into peace, in the growing moonlight, before the visit to the sick child was over, and the homeward drive begun. David had sat musing in the phaeton while the two women were in the house. He had heard Jane singing inside, his grave look melting into a sort of tender sweetness at the sound. Often afterwards, at twilight, he thought of that

soft singing; and when the first stars came out on a Sabbath evening, like far-off lamps in the purple-gray sky, he remembered the quaint old hymn which had rung in Jane's heart before she started, and which she sang now with the sick girl's hands in hers: —

“Our Lord on thee his name did fix,
Which makes thee rich and gay.
Amidst his golden candlesticks
My Saviour walks to-day.”

“I never heard you sing that hymn before,” he said, as they started away in the silvery light.

“My mother used to sing it,” said Jane, blushing a little at having been overheard. “I always was fond of it. She used to take me in her lap and sing to me on Sunday mornings, and I remember I thought it was so pleasant to have ‘mirth’ in a hymn, and I liked the verse about ‘my Saviour’s face did make thee shine.’ I almost always think of it when I wake on a sunshiny Sunday.”

“Poor Annie seemed to like it as much as you did,” remarked Miss Wyman. “Did you see how her little freckled face lighted up, and how she smiled over the golden candlesticks? Poor child!

What a shame it is that such young girls should be allowed to go into the factories. Well, she can come back to the cooking-school, I imagine, as she grows better, and I 'll see that she finds a good place soon. I 'm so much obliged to you, Jane, for coming. You have a very sweet way in a sick-room, did you know it?"

"I ought to be at home in a sick-room, and to know what to do," said Jane, "after that long time of father's illness, and so many times when Aunt Bab has been laid up, to say nothing of — other things."

She stopped with a quick little sigh. Some words about Maddy had been on her lips. How many times she had helped her little sister through childish ailments, and how Maddy had always wanted her and clung to her at such times! She had been very pale the other day — Jane put her hand before her face impulsively, as if to shut out the thoughts that must not be allowed to spoil her friends' pleasure, and the next moment began hastily to remark on the beauty of the moonlight still dropping in a misty shower.

A silence fell around them again after a little. They were skirting the cemetery with its swaying

willows and dark, solemn pines, and it was hard to speak of common things with that grand requiem of the trees and wind sounding in their ears. Miss Wyman seemed lost in thought, and her companions looked at her and at each other with pitying eyes, thinking of the sorrow which must be fresh in her mind. They had almost passed the place when she spoke again.

“I should have liked to drive through to-night, if I had not been anxious to see how Annie was. I wish the gates were open now. I should like to have shown you where — where my cousin Richard lies.”

She spoke quite calmly and gently, but the tears sprang to Jane’s eyes. She slipped her hand into Miss Wyman’s without speaking, while David made answer that he knew the Wyman lot, and that no one could wish for a lovelier resting-place. Miss Wyman hardly seemed to hear him.

“Do you know that this is my birthday?” she said presently. “No: how should you? Dick was the last one left to keep my birthday. He and I always had some little celebration together on this day. We have kept it so for twenty-five years. I — I have missed him to-day.”

"Dear Miss Wyman," whispered Jane.

"Yes, my dear, I know," said the deformed woman, smiling, though tears were glittering in her eyes. "I know all that you would like to say to me, and you just need n't try. It is n't that I have n't a host of friends, or that it 's the being the last of my family that I mind — there is n't any last, really, you know. What you don't know, is what my cousin Richard did for me long ago, and what he has been doing for me for all my life since, and why my birthday is the most sacred day of the year to me, and why my life has been happier than many a woman's who is as lovely as an angel in her form and face, but who has n't had the gift that I have had to make her richer than any queen. I never expected to tell any one about it, but — Dick has gone home, and this is my birthday; and, David, I have come to think of you as a sort of younger brother in these last six years, and somehow, I should rather like to have you know what Dick was — nobody else will ever know."

"Do tell us," said David gently. He had never heard Miss Wyman speak in such a way.

"It is n't so much to tell," she said after a

moment's pause. "It was the doing, that was so much. David, you know he was not my first cousin. He came from another branch of the family, and never lived here until I was a young woman. I had often heard of him, of course, for he was full of talent, and every one said he would rise in his profession, just as he did; and my father was always interested in all the Wymans. Poor father! I can understand just what a disappointment it was to him that his only child should have been a hump-backed daughter, though he always tried not to let me see that I was a disappointment. But I had an uncle who never thought of me at all, I believe, with anything but love and pride. I was rather bright, as a girl, I think, and Uncle John used to draw me out and teach me, and talk about me to his friends. Everybody knew about me, you know, and I dare say Dr. Wyman's deformed niece was laughed about a good deal; but we cared nothing at all for what other people said — my dear old uncle and I. Well, when I was grown up, as I said, just about the time my father died, Uncle John went to visit our Philadelphia cousins, and he and Dick struck up as firm a friendship as he

and I had always had, and — don't be afraid of hurting me if you laugh; I often laugh about it myself — that dear old doting uncle sung my praises to the poor boy, until he actually fancied that he had fallen in love with me, and — came down here to seek me out! Do you take it in, Jane, my dear? Uncle John had never said one word about my twisted shoulders; everybody knew of it at home and he forgot it, I think, himself — that was one reason I was always so happy with him, for I was a little sensitive then — and he said all sorts of foolish things, and read some little verses that I had written, and talked of me as his best comrade, and never knew how he was misleading poor Dick, until it was too late. In fact, he never knew it at all, for we never told him. Poor dear Uncle John! how could he have understood? And so my cousin came here with his mind made up in a young man's foolish fashion, that I was the one woman in the world for him, and found me — like this."

Little Jane leaned over and kissed her friend. She could not speak for tears.

"He must have loved you more than ever," said David, half under his breath.

Miss Wyman smiled more brightly than before. "I knew you would understand," she said. "I don't think many men would. David, that was just it. He did keep on caring for me in spite of it all. I 've never got over the wonder of it in all these years. It was on my birthday that he told me first. He would have married me,"—a beautiful, soft blush spread over the pale face of the speaker; Miss Wyman looked quite illumined for the moment. "He wanted to take me away with him and spend his life in caring for me; and he was right when he said that he should never tire of the care, or think of me as a burden. But of course I could n't let him. I tried to make him think that it was a mistake: that he did not know himself; but I stopped talking so when I saw how it hurt him. Only I would not go with him. And then he said that if I would not be his wife, I must give him the place of my first friend; that he would leave his home to live near me, and that I should never want for care and love while he lived. And it was so. You know what a friend he has been to me. Everybody understood that; but nobody but Dick and I, and now you two, ever guessed at what was

behind it, and nobody but I myself can ever know all that he has done to help me and make my life happy. Why, just the knowing that such a heart as that was mine — David, I don't believe you — I don't think even Dick himself — could quite understand what that has been to me. It has been like a golden gift hidden away in the very depths of my life, making me rich forever. I shall never speak of it again probably, but I am not sorry that you know. And you must never think of me as anything but happy, even now when he has gone before. I would not change with the happiest woman in the world. It was worth being crooked and weak and ugly for half a century and more just to have such a stream of blessing flowing alongside my life all this time.

“There! I won't tire you out talking, and you need n't say anything, either of you. I 've been opening my treasures this Sunday evening, that 's all, and giving you a little peep at the gold and frankincense and myrrh. Do you know, one of the happy things of my life is that they are all so mingled together that it will be easy to lift them up as one offering to the King at last?

Drive a little faster, David; it is growing late. Jane, don't cry. Why, child, don't you know that I am happy, this very minute? It was n't to make you sad that I told you, but glad for me. If he had died when I was young, it would have been different; but, now, it can be only a short separation. Death is n't anything so dreadful to me now. I have learned to think of it differently since I knew your mother, David. People who belong together don't lose each other, she always says. I have wondered sometimes when she said so, if it would seem like that to me; and I am thankful from the bottom of my heart to find that it does."

"I am thankful from mine, to you, for telling us," said David, in a low voice. He was evidently much moved and spoke hardly a word during the remainder of the drive, while Miss Wyman and Jane talked on softly, asking and answering a few questions about the little story just told, and then slipping into a quiet "Sunday talk" which lasted until they turned into Barton Square and stopped before Miss Wyman's door. The quaint little "fairy godmother" looked at

him with penetrating eyes as she left the carriage.

“He has made up his mind,” she said within herself. “He did understand, and Dick and I have helped them to comfort, I think. It has paid to tell him.”

CHAPTER XIX.

GLADNESS AND SORROW.

WILL you wait for me one moment and let me take you through the Square?" said David gently to Jane, at the same moment. "I see that Robert has come back, and I'll just leave the horse with him and then come. I should like to talk a little before we go in. It is such a lovely evening, and mother will not mind a few minutes longer."

He looked back as he drove in at the gate at the two women standing together in the soft radiance. They were very unlike, and yet there must be something of kinship in their hearts, he told himself. It was strange how Jane seemed to "fit in" with his mother and Miss Wyman.

"If only it might be!" he said to himself.

They were standing side by side, before the little splashing fountain, a few minutes later, looking down into the gleaming water and listening to the soft tinkle of falling drops in a sort of dreamy silence. Of what was Jane thinking,

with that trembling half smile? How fair and delicate she looked in the moonlight — the brave, simple little woman, with her dauntless, tender heart! If David might only shelter and protect and save her from the rough ways where her patient feet had walked so firmly from childhood! He sighed as he looked down at her, and Jane glanced up in surprise to meet his earnest gaze.

“Do you think,” said David slowly, “do you think that Miss Wyman was right — that a woman is happier for knowing that one loves her? That it was best for her cousin to tell her, though he must have known how it would end? Would it have made you happier in her place?”

A little flitting color rose in her face.

“I think it was right — and noble,” she said simply. “I am so glad for Miss Wyman. I did not know that she had been so happy.”

David North reached out and took her hand — the little toilworn hand that he loved. A look of startled wonder flashed into her face, and she turned pale, as he went on, but she did not shrink from him.

“But you, yourself, Jane,” he said, his deep voice not quite so steady as usual. “Jane, would

you care, would it make you glad or only sorry, if you knew of love that is yours? Would it help you in the very least, dear, in all you have to bear? Oh, if my heart were worth the offering — but I need n't offer it. Jane, it seems sometimes as if you must know already that it is yours, as if you must understand that I love you."

Jane could not answer. She had covered her face with her other hand to hide the sudden flood of emotion which almost overcame her. How wildly her heart was beating! Could she have understood him? Love? for her? Was it over then, the loneliness which had seemed to wrap her round of late? Was this crowning gift of a noble heart really hers? She trembled and could not speak. It seemed like a strange dream.

No one was near them. David drew her to a seat in the shadow of one of the showering maples and waited for some answer.

"Jane," he said, pleadingly.

She lifted her eyes then and looked at him, wonderingly, half unbelievingly. "Do you mean me?" she whispered. "Do you really care for me? It seems impossible."

He laid his other hand over hers and held it there closely, protectingly.

“I have never loved any other woman,” he said. “Jane, I can’t tell you all you are to me. You don’t know how the thought of you goes with me and helps me everywhere — my brave, sweet little love! I’ve told you about mother’s roses, and how she has sent one out with me every day since I was a boy, to make me think of her and to remind me to help and give comfort wherever I can in my daily work. Jane, you are something like that to me. If I could carry you through this world on my heart — my tender little white flower, dear — you would keep off temptations and troubles and perplexities as nothing else in the world can do, and I should grow wiser and stronger in doing good every day of my life, I think. Don’t cry, dear,” — for Jane’s tears were falling fast now, — “I don’t want to make you sad. I know you can’t come to me now, but I wanted to tell you all this, and let you understand that if the time ever does come when you can come” —

But Jane put out her hand to stop his words.

“Hush,” she said, smiling through her tears.

“Don’t say any more, please. You know I must n’t let you. We must n’t think of anything more than this. I’m not young, you know, and it could n’t be for so long ; perhaps never—and I could n’t bear it to think that you were bound to me. Please don’t speak of it again. I should feel always as if I were waiting for — Aunt Bab. Oh, I could n’t bear it! It would be wicked! We must go on as we have, in the work God has given us to do, and put this away! But, oh!” —she turned toward him with an involuntary gesture of love, her whole face glowing and transfigured with the inner brightness, —“oh! I can never thank you enough for telling me!”

A stream of light suddenly issued from the cottage door just opposite. Mrs. North had come out to the porch to look for them, and they could see Teddy beside her, thrusting a bright, childish face forward to catch a first glimpse of the returning horse. They must not stay longer. The old life must begin again, and these few sweet moments be “hidden away in the depths of their lives like a golden secret.” Jane rose and put out her hand.

“We must not let them grow anxious,” she

said. "Come, dear, I think — it seems to me that I can never be all unhappy again. How good God is to me — and you!"

But as they passed on, David drew her aside for one moment into the shadow of the spreading maple.

"Jane," he said, "if it must be so — and it shall be just as you wish — if I am to keep my love in my own heart and not look forward, I 'll do my best, dear, and try to be just what will help you most. Only, my love, kiss me once for a good-by, for it is a good-by, and tell me just once what I have told you, if you can say it truly — that you love me. I 'll be content with that for all my life, Jane, if you wish it."

Jane lifted her face, quite simply and quietly, with a solemn gladness in her childlike eyes.

"I love you, David, now and always," she said softly.

"As I love you," he whispered, touching her lips with his own. "God help me to be worthy, my love."

They went back to the cottage without another word. But as David stood for a few moments talking to Aunt Bab while Mrs. North gathered

up the papers from which she had been reading aloud, Jane came to him with a little folded slip of paper in her hand.

"I think you will like it," she said quietly; "I saw it in a newspaper the other day, and just now I cut it out to show you. Good-night."

"Good-night," he answered, taking her hand for a moment as he turned away; but in their hearts, both said "Good-by."

It was only a few lines clipped from the "selected" column of a religious weekly, but he pressed it to his lips almost passionately as he laid it away in his pocket-book — the first and last token which he was ever likely to receive from the woman whom he loved: —

"Shall I forget on this side of the grave?
I promise nothing; you must wait and see,
Patient and brave.
(O my soul, watch with him and he with me!)"

"Shall I forget in peace of paradise?
I promise nothing! Follow, friend, and see,
Faithful and wise.
(O my soul, lead the way; he walks with me!)"

"It 's raining," remarked Aunt Bab definitively, and folded her lips together with the air

of one who had made an incontrovertible statement.

Teddy turned his head and gazed at her from his perch by the window with sober, childish scorn for such an evident truism — scorn, however, which was suppressed under a mantle of silence, out of respect to the years of the speaker.

“It’s been raining every minute since yesterday morning, night and all,” he said after a moment. “Did n’t you know that, Aunt Bab? Auntie Jane says it’s the winter breaking up. I should think she’d say melting up, should n’t you? There is n’t any ice to break now.”

“Children should be seen and not heard,” responded Aunt Bab with dignity, which was marred the next moment by Teddy’s leaving his chair to make a ladder of the rounds of her own, and perching himself on its wide arm, with a hand on her shoulder by way of support.

“I can see better here, it’s so much higher,” he explained; and Aunt Bab’s grim features unbent as she put an arm about him to steady him. It was singular how well Aunt Bab and Teddy always seemed to get on together.

Jane smiled at them across the machine as they

rocked jerkily, watching the falling drops that streamed down the pane beside them.

“The rain cometh down and the snow from heaven,” said Aunt Bab presently; and Teddy responded confidently that he knew it, and he was n’t going to make a fuss, but he wished there would n’t be so much come at a time that he could n’t go to school.

“When a boy ’s only just begun, and only had his writing-book day before yesterday, you want to be there!” said the young aspirant to literary honors. “Besides, I lost an agate down Gray & Bight’s coal-cellar grate the last time I went by, and I was going to ask them again to let me go down there and hunt it up. They said I could n’t find it in the coal, but I know I could.”

A long gust of wind swept wailing past, and the rain dashed more fiercely against the window. It was pouring through the gutters in the street, swollen with melted snow, and foaming like a small mountain torrent.

“Thinks it ’s a brook!” cried Teddy. “See it splash. You ain’t a brook, though: you ’re nothing but a lot of rain in a gutter, and you ’ll go down the sewer-hole in about five minutes!”

“Such is life!” said Aunt Bab. “The days of our years are threescore years and ten, and it never rains but it pours. I would have gone to walk if it had n’t rained, seeing I have n’t been for a week, but I don’t complain.”

“Would n’t want to go *now*,” chuckled Teddy. “See how that boy slumps round; he’s the only one in the street. I’d like to be a messenger-boy and wear rubber boots and go on a velocipede when it was pleasant. Look at him drip! Why—I believe he’s coming here! Auntie Jane, may I go to the door?”

Jane nodded, smiling. She was in the midst of a difficult bit of stitching, and did not look after the boy as he ran by. No doubt it was a message about Mrs. Norton’s silk, now in process of making over. A day or two afterward, Jane took up the same piece of work, with a strange, wondering remembrance of the quiet and calm in which it had been begun, and a vague feeling that she had been through some wild whirlwind since, which had driven rest away forever. How pleasant it had been, that rainy morning, while she sewed and smiled and listened to the childish talk at the other side of the room! She had been

growing calmer and stronger from week to week lately, it had seemed to herself. It had not been an unhappy winter, in spite of care and toil and the wistful longing for her sister which was never long unfeigned. What a difference it had made to her—that happy memory of a golden Sabbath evening, with its one clear, never-to-be-forgotten glimpse of love that was hers forever! She could never feel alone again now, though no such word had been spoken since between herself and her lover, and though to all outward seeming there was only the quiet friendship, growing stronger and more a thing of use, with the passing months, but always the same. If Mrs. North and Miss Wyman understood and noted thankfully the peaceful face of the dweller in the four-roomed cottage and smiled at each other with half-amused tenderness over the “comfort she and David seemed to take together,” Jane had no suspicion of it. She was happier and brighter, that was all—and she and David knew the reason why. She had been thinking of him on this wild March morning, hearing the sound of his voice through the clatter of her machine, and the patter and dash against the windows, and smiling to herself

over the memory of a comical magazine story which he had been reading aloud the night before.

The smile was still on her lips when she turned from her work to open the note which Teddy brought her — a note in an unfamiliar hand; — it was not Mrs. Norton, then. She opened it carelessly. Some one wanted work done probably, and whoever it was must be in a hurry to send on such a day. What an odd, cramped hand — “Miss Jane Dunbar” — Jane dropped the paper suddenly, with a sharp cry of anguish.

“*Maddy!*”

Aunt Bab started and looked around in affright at the sound, and Teddy shrank back. Neither of them had ever seen Jane look so. Her face was drawn and almost gray, and her eyes glittered dry and bright as she caught up the note again and read it over.

“What — what — is it, Jane?” cried the alarmed old lady.

But Jane only shook her head with a gasp, holding out the paper. No, there could be no mistake. She pushed away her machine and rose mechanically, hardly seeming to notice her surroundings.

"I must go," she said. "Teddy, help me. I can't seem to see right. My overshoes"—

"But oh, what is it?" wept Aunt Bab, with the note in her shaking hands. "Jane, you ain't doing right by me not to tell me! Don't you see that I hain't got my glasses on?"

Jane turned and took the bit of paper once more. She was quite calm again now, holding herself quiet with a strong effort. Her voice sounded strained and hoarse as she read the message aloud:—

MISS JANE DUNBAR,—I thought it was only right you should know that your sister can't live through the day. She has been calling for you half the night, and I would have sent before if I could have left her to write the note. She may not know you now, but if you come right away you will be in time to see her. She has a boy, born yesterday. I have done my best for her; but her husband is away, and she ought to have some one of her own people with her. I told her I would send for you if anything went wrong. Come as soon as you get this. 15 Marvin Street is the number.

Yours,

MRS. MARY PEASE.

"You must get along without me to-day," said Jane, in the same strange voice. "Take care of her, Teddy, and go in and tell Grandma North

that I have gone to my sister. She 'll see that nothing goes wrong No, Aunt Bab, I can't let you go. I must hurry too much. There! don't cry. It can't do any good, you know. That's right, Teddy, I wanted my umbrella too. I shall come back at night. You see, it says she can't live — through" — she faltered a little, and bent down to fasten her cloak without finishing the sentence; but there was no mist in her eyes.

"Good-by," she said briefly, and walked out into the storm — looking neither to the right nor to the left. Aunt Bab burst into a wail as she disappeared, and Teddy stared after her with a frightened, quivering underlip.

"She — she looks like somebody else," he said, with a forlorn half sob. "She never kissed me good-by nor anything. O Aunt Bab! when do you suppose she 'll come back? Ever?"

There were others beside Teddy who were startled at sight of that gray, haggard face that morning. More than one of those whom she met on the way to the station stopped to look after her curiously and pityingly, and the conductor on the city-bound train spoke to her in respectful, subdued tones as he took her ticket. Jane sighed

as she saw him. It would have been a comfort if this had been David's train. She would have liked to see him, if only for a moment, to gain strength for what was before her. She must collect her thoughts and make sure of her own power of self-control before she left the cars. How slowly they were going! Oh, if she could only fly, as her thoughts were flying, straight to her sister's bedside. Would she be in time? Would Maddy speak to her before she went away, or could there be not even a farewell for her from the child whom she would have died to save from suffering? "She has been calling for you." Ah, was Maddy's dying voice speaking her name now, and she not there to answer? She groaned aloud in the agony of the thought, and the sound recalled her to herself.

"I must n't let myself go on like this," she thought. "O God, help me to be strong! But oh, for Christ's sake, keep my sister here until I can see her once more!"

The sacred name brought a certain quiet with it, and she repeated it over and over to herself, hardly conscious that she was praying. How strangely her mind wandered, while the slow

minutes dragged themselves along, and the rush of the wheels sounded in her ears. Maddy was a woman, dying among strangers, in a place unknown to her. There was a baby crying beside her; another helpless, feeble life to be left motherless, as its mother herself had been left. Jane would see them soon — perhaps too late for the throbbing love that surged within her, to reach the heart that had been calling for her. Why should she think of her sister as a little child coming in flushed and excited from play, and climbing into her lap to rest; or, as a small, white-robed figure, kneeling at her side to whisper, “Jesus, tender Shepherd, hear me,” and lifting a rosy, sleepy face for the good-night kiss. Such dewy, drooping eyes! such clinging, soft arms! O little Maddy! Mother’s “bonnie baby!” Was all this sorrow and estrangement real, and that happy, golden childhood over forever? “Some of her own people ought to be with her!” Would the half-hour never pass?

CHAPTER XX.

AN ANSWERED PRAYER.

IT was over at length. The train had stopped, and Jane was passing through clattering streets in a depot carriage, looking about her with unnoting eyes and vaguely conscious of the wild beating of her heart, where the pain grew sharper and stronger with every moment of suspense. But she was sure of herself now. She could face what was before her without faltering—"Christ! Christ!"

Was this the place? The driver was speaking to her and pointing out a shabby house with a sign of "BOARD" in one of its windows. What was it? Ah, the money. She had forgotten? Yes, he must excuse her; it was here. She had forgotten; that was it. The man looked at her speculatively as he drove away. "In trouble, poor thing!" he said to himself, looking back at the solitary, dark figure on the steps of the boarding-house. "How her eyes look! death-struck, you might say. I 'd ruther see a woman take on than look like that. Poor thing!"

The door was opening. Jane's breath came a little more quickly. It was the keeper of the house, a stout, comfortable looking woman in a flannel wrapper, with various spots and streaks down its front. She caught Jane's hand and drew her inside with a look of relief.

"You 're her sister," she whispered excitedly, with a little sob. "I sent the note the first thing this morning. O poor thing! She 's wanted you so, and you 're in time, thank the Lord! though it won't be for long."

"Where—how is she?" asked Jane falteringly. She was already laying aside her wet outer garments and going to the stove to make sure that no dampness lingered about her. The woman looked at her curiously, as others had done.

"You ain't going to give way, or faint, or anything?" she said doubtfully. "Though it can't hurt her now, I suppose. The doctor, he said she could n't rally from this. She 's been sinkin' away for all the mornin'. I've done my best for her, poor thing! Come up. You ain't wet. And say, if—if—she should n't happen to—quite know what she 's about—her mind 's ben wanderin' some—you won't be too disappointed. I guess she 'll know who it is."

“I—thought it might be so,” said Jane dully. “No, I sha’n’t faint. I—could n’t hope—I—where is she?”

The woman turned and led the way upstairs without a word. Long afterward Jane could summon up before her mind’s eye a picture of the darkened room, with every detail clear and distinct: the shabby furniture; the worn carpet; the little stove with its cracked isinglass through which the coals glowed dimly; the indefinable air of disorder and discomfort that hung about the place; a pitiful place for bright, beauty-loving Madeline Dunbar. But now—the elder sister saw only that white, dying face turned towards her on the pillow; the closed eyes with their dark lashes grown darker by contrast with the wan cheek where they rested; the bright hair that lay tangled on the shoulder; the pale lips from which the vivid, beautiful color had fled forever—could that be Maddy?

“Speak to her,” whispered Mrs. Pease. “She does n’t hear us. She’s stupid like now.”

Jane bent over the dying form and kissed the damp forehead.

“Maddy! Maddy!” she said. “Oh, my little Maddy, look up! It’s your own Janey!”

The dim eyes opened slowly, lingeringly. There was a bewildered expression in the wan face—bewildered and dreamy at once. It seemed as if Maddy were a long way off, somehow. Could Jane call her back?

“Maddy!” she said again, with a thrill of agony in her voice.

Maddy lifted her eyes and looked into her sister’s. A faint smile seemed to dawn in her face. She tried to raise the hand that lay on the quilt as if to put it to her sister’s cheek, in the pretty baby fashion of long ago, but it fell back, powerless.

“Janey,” she whispered, “Janey! Janey!”

“Do you know me, darling?” said Jane, with white, trembling lips. “O Maddy, can you hear me? Do you know how I love you? Dear, speak to me before you go away. Maddy!”

She smiled again, that dreamy, far-off smile.

“I—wanted you,” she murmured, closing her eyes and then opening them once more to look at her sister. “There was something to tell you—I forgot. I wanted you.”

“Was it the baby, dear?” broke in Mrs. Pease, with the tears running down her cheeks, as she laid a tiny, blanketed bundle by the mother’s side.

“Did you want to ask about your boy, dear heart? Look up, Mis’ Carling, dear. Such a pretty boy!”

A gleam of light flashed into the dying eyes and then died away.

“My baby!” she said, and then seemed to drift away into forgetfulness once more, though the faint smile still lingered about her lips.

“I’ll take care of him always, Maddy,” said Jane, with steadfast eyes, and the sound of her voice seemed to recall her sister once more to thought and memory.

“He’ll be better than I was,” she murmured drowsily. “You know I’ll be up there to pray—yes, I must say my prayers, you know—tender Shepherd—was I cross to you, Janey? I’m sorry.”

The sister-mother stooped once more to kiss her child. There was no thought of forgiveness in her mind; only love and sorrow and awe. For Maddy was passing from her; the pain and trouble and discontent of life were past forever for her, and she was a little child again, sinking to sleep in the arms that loved her best.

“I’ll be—good—to-morrow,” said Maddy, faintly, and closed her eyes for the last time. She never spoke again.

Jane sat for a long time, watching the flitting breath that came and went more and more faintly. The little baby raised a feeble wail, but it was Mrs. Pease that lifted and hushed him; the mother's ears were closed to earthly sounds, and as her baby was taken from her, she sighed once more softly and passed quietly away. "The beginning of peace" had come at length for Madeline Carling.

Jane sat quite calm and dry-eyed while the kind-hearted landlady poured out a tearful story later in the day. The baby lay in her lap, and she looked down at him with strange yearning tenderness, as the woman talked. Maddy's baby! It might almost be that other time when she had held a tiny, sleeping form for weary hours, whispering over and over to herself the last promise sobbed at the mother's side—only, then she had been a frightened, desolate child, with a wild longing for the tender mother-love that had been her shelter until that dreary day; and now she was a heart-broken woman, with a life of toil and sorrow before her and a black cloud of pain shrouding all the past.

Maddy had been living here for several months, Mrs. Pease said. Yes, before last summer. Mrs. Pease had been sorry for the poor, young thing,

she was so alone. She had cried a good deal in the daytimes when her husband was away. He had been away often of late. Well, Mrs. Pease would n't go so far as to say that men were n't likely to be tired of home when there was a sickly wife and nothing especially going on—but it was hard on a young thing like Mrs. Carling. Happy? Well, that's as you take it. There were folks happier and folks not so well off. She supposed he meant to be kind—but—well. Jane knew what he was, high and mighty, and wanting things his own way; and his wife was just like a child, up and down and right out, about everything; and they had words now and then, and she would cry her eyes out when he was gone, and—well, Mrs. Pease had heard her sobbing, often and often, for “Jane! Jane!”

“Look here,” said the good woman, sitting upright and ceasing to weep in her excitement. “I ain't one that thinks it 's a good thing to rake up old scores; but I know as well as you do that it was n't your blame, and I 'm just going to tell you. I don't know what 't was all about, but I tell you she wanted you, and he would n't let her make up. He was sot against it, and they had words again

and again, as I was saying, and he always had his own way. She was sort of awed by him, you know ; got it into her head that he was higher up the scale than what she was, and I don't say but what he was willing enough to have it so—there! I'll own up, I don't like him and never did! Pretty dear, she 'd fret and storm, but she would n't go against him. There was that time she met you last summer! Law! I knew all about it. She give out that time, and cried so when she got home (meeting you sudden, you know, and not having time to think what to do), that he had to call me in, and afterward she told me what it was. You had a white rose on that day, and it fell off and she caught it up before you saw her. She 's got it in her Bible along with a note from you that she cried over more 'n once. I got into the way of watching her, you see, along of being sorry for her, though you need n't think that I 've been a-talking her over with the other boarders, for I ain't. But there! They was fond of each other enough. I didn't mean they warn't. It 's no good talking over them things now she 's gone, and I do feel to pity him when he comes home and finds her so. Why, he went off three days

ago, not thinking of this coming, and we didn't even know the place near enough to send him word. Will you want to see him? He can't be anything but decent now"—

"And she kept my rose?" said Jane, with a sharp pang at the thought of that unhappy meeting of last summer. "Oh, you don't know how I thank you for telling me! And she wanted me. I thought that it would be so. Oh, why should he have kept us apart so? My poor little Maddy!"

Even as she spoke a hasty step was heard on the stairs, springing, elastic, as if in haste. Mrs. Pease sprang up and rushed to the door.

"It's he!" she gasped. "They didn't stop him down-stairs, as I told 'em to do, and I'll have to tell him here! Oh, what shall I say?" She hurried out, shutting the door behind her. Jane heard her trembling voice as she spoke to the new comer, and the sudden pause of the hasty feet; then a hoarse cry. She went swiftly to that still corner of the bed, and pressed one more lingering kiss on the pale forehead. It might be her last. She had not the first right there now.

"Good-by, my darling," she whispered.

The door was flung violently open, and Mr. Carling staggered into the room, breathless, horror-stricken, with wild, despairing eyes.

“Dead! *dead!*” he cried, and then stopped short at the sight of Jane. She shrank before the fury in his face. “You here!” he said fiercely. “What brought you? Were you here when—when—and I gone? Curse you, go away and leave my wife to me! Must you always”—his wild words died away. Jane had quietly uncovered the peaceful face of the dead, and his anger vanished in that still presence.

“It can’t be true! She is n’t gone!” he cried, dropping on his knees at the bedside with a burst of stormy sobs. “You don’t *mean* that she’s gone without one word to me!”

“Oh, she left a good-by yesterday,” sobbed Mrs. Pease, with her apron at her eyes. “She knew she was going, and she wanted the baby named for you. Oh, won’t you look at the baby? See, his aunt’s got him.”

“What do I care for the baby?” cried the young man. “Keep it out of my sight. *Yesterday*—she said good-by yesterday, and—and—you were with her when she was dying and had

the last — oh, you 've come between us to the very end! Leave me alone with her. She 's mine, not yours!"

Jane turned and left the room without a word, clasping the child to her bosom. She looked back at the door with a great pity in her heart for the man in his angry grief. Yes, he had the first right, and Maddy was his. A long, trembling sigh broke from her as she went away.

"Best leave him to fight it out," said Mrs. Pease. "I know how he 'll be. He 'll work it off and be civil to-morrow when you come back. I 'll take care of the baby. They don't need me down-stairs, with my daughter to look after things. If I was you, I 'd get right home and lie down. You 'll feel better if you let yourself give way a little. Don't take what he says to heart. Folks have to have allowances made for them when they get such a shock."

"I know," said Jane gently. "I shall come back to-morrow, for he will need help. You said — he had not been doing well lately? They had been troubled for money. He will need help for the" —

"The funeral? Well, I 'm afraid he will," said

Mrs. Pease, wiping her eyes again. "They 're behind with everything. He has n't thought of that, of course, but I shall talk to him to-night and bring him round. I knew how to get at him. You need n't be afraid about what he 'll say to you next time."

"No," answered Maddy's sister, still more gently. "He will let me have the baby too, I think. He—could n't—yes, I think it is better for me to go. You have been very kind. I shall never forget it." She held out her hand with a little wistful smile. "Tell him that I will help him in anything about Maddy," she said, and went out again into the gathering twilight of the stormy day.

David North gave a start of surprise, a little later, as he saw her face in the car, with that strained, heart-broken look in the quiet eyes. He made his way to her side anxiously.

"What is it?" he asked. "Jane, tell me what has happened? You look like death."

Jane told her story very quietly. Her voice did not falter as she spoke, and she only looked wistfully at her friend, as he brushed a tear from his cheek.

"I don't seem to take it all in," she said. "I suppose it will seem different when I can be quiet. It is like a dream now. It makes me very thankful that I could see Maddy once more."

"And you are to take her baby?" said David. "Another burden. O Jane, how can you do it?"

Her lips quivered slightly for the first time.

"I shall have to give up my little Teddy," she said simply. "David, I should have liked to keep him. I love him very much. But Maddy's baby is my own flesh and blood. I could n't let it be cared for by strangers. I promised her."

The train was stopping. David went out with her to the platform, in the gathering darkness. He took her hand in his and held it a moment, looking at her with pained, anxious eyes.

"Jane, Jane, how can I bear it? How can you bear it?" he cried under his breath. "Is there never to be an end, and am I never to be able to help you? Dear, how long must it be so?"

"I suppose as long as God chooses," said Jane slowly. "If we could n't bear it, David, he would n't send it. I suppose if it was too hard for us, he would take us home as he has taken Maddy."

She turned away and went wearily out of the station in the direction of Barton Square, and David watched her with a sinking of the heart such as he had never known before.

"It is n't like her to be so," he said. "It is killing her. My poor little Jane. If I could only take her home!"

But the reaction came at last, when Teddy came to her to say his good-night prayer, clinging to her hand and laying his warm cheek against it with uncomprehending sympathy for the trouble which had made Grandma and Aunt Bab cry, and which kept Aunt Jane so still and pale that evening.

"God bless Auntie Jane's little sister and make her happy," he murmured; but the prayer was never finished. Jane burst suddenly into a storm of passionate tears, catching him in her arms and clasping him to her desolate heart.

"O Teddy, Teddy darling," she cried. "You need n't ask it now. God has heard you already, and Aunt Jane's little sister is safe and happy at last."

CHAPTER XXI.

THE CALM AFTER THE STORM.

THE wild March weather had passed into springtime, and the violets and apple-blooms of May had given way in their turn to the full glory of the blossoming summer. Mrs. North's plants were out again in their fair-weather station on porch and roof, and her little plot of flowers was brighter than ever under the parlor window. There were four-o'clocks there this year; and Teddy and his comrades were fond of gathering about them to mark the exact time of their opening, and to speculate as to how the flowers knew the time of day. The vicinity had never been so overrun with children within the memory of Barton Square. Perhaps it was because a new flagging had lately been put down on that side of the green, as if with especial reference to the convenience of young marble-players and "hop-scotchers;" perhaps Teddy himself was the attraction, for certainly there was no more popular boy in the Square than the irrepressible "brownie" of

Number 15. The other children entertained feelings approaching to envy for this fortunate youth who lived in constant companionship with the pretty old lady; had access to the famous black bag, with its store of lozenges, and was the pet and darling of a second household, where he was so much at home that it would have been hard to say whether he lived most at Uncle David's, or in the four-roomed cottage with Auntie Jane. In fact, the four-roomed cottage itself had come to be regarded as a sort of annex to the pretty dwelling beside it, and there was hardly a boy in the neighborhood who did not have a nod and a smile for the sweet-faced, gentle little woman in the shabby dress who worked so busily there. They had even volunteered to "help her along" with the baby who had taken Teddy's place in her home; and it was a common sight to see his carriage standing before the door, while a dozen boys romped around it, and "kept an eye" on its occupant in the pauses of leap-frog and tag.

A fair, frail-looking child it was, with grave, soft eyes, more like his aunt's than those of the beautiful mother who lay under the springing grass in that green cemetery across the city.

There was nothing about him to recall the dimpled, laughing baby of twenty years before. Maddy had been like a fresh, rosy apple-blossom, swayed by winds of glee and crowned with spring sunshine. Little Fred was a white snowdrop, nestling to earth, with only a soft, passing smile like a gleam of gold, for those who found their way to his baby heart. Perhaps it was the very quietness and serenity about him which made him such a favorite among the boys. Certain it was, that it had come to be a fashion to admire him — a fashion caught, doubtless, from the popular Teddy who adored his new cousin. Children were liable to call at the cottage at any hour of the day, with a benevolent request for the loan of the baby for an airing, or to ask if their services were desired to "amuse" him at home. He was overwhelmed with gifts adapted to his infant years, such as whirling wire spiders, tin banks, numberless kittens, brought by their disinterested young owners, in the fond hope of saving them from an early death as well as pleasing the object of their affections; and such a variety of balls and tops and sugar dogs, that Jane had threatened, with helpless laughter, to open a museum of

Freddy's belongings, with Bob Gray as showman. But the spontaneous, childish affection for her orphaned baby touched and comforted her, and she looked on while he was passed about from one jolly nurse to another, with a thankful consciousness that the little one would grow up with plenty of friends about him, in spite of the loss of father and mother.

Mr. Carling had given the child up very willingly, and had even added a half-apology for the words spoken on the day of Maddy's death. He had been rude, Mrs. Pease had told him; Jane must excuse it if he had spoken sharply. It was a great shock to come home and find that his wife was gone, and that another had taken his place at the last; he was quite willing to forget the past if Jane was, and of course he was grateful for the help she had given him. He was going away, and they might never meet again. He would be glad to shake hands and part as friends, and would send her money for the child when he could; just now he had not enough to pay his debts. Yes, it was much better for the boy to be taken away. What could he do with a baby? And this one had been the cause of his mother's death.

They had parted quietly and without bitterness; and Jane had come home with the child, feeling him hers entirely — though — could she ever feel anything quite her own again?

The neighbors had pitied her for the charge, and had talked of her with sympathy as they saw her, day after day, at her machine, with the weak-minded old lady rocking at the window, and the helpless little child in his cradle beside her; but, after the first outburst of grief, Jane had gone quietly on, with no loss of sweetness in her gentle eyes, though it seemed sometimes as if she were “wearin’ awa’” under the ceaseless work; and though David North groaned inwardly many times when, passing in the morning twilight, he saw the light in “Maddy’s room,” and the shadow against the white curtain, of a woman walking to and fro with a child’s head on her shoulder. Once or twice he had poured out his trouble and anxiety to Jane herself, but she always put his words aside with a bright smile.

“It makes me happier to be busy,” she would say. “You must n’t worry, David, for it won’t hurt me. The baby ’ll be older soon, and less care; and, besides, you don’t know the comfort it

is to me to have him, and remember that Maddy and I were one in heart again before she went away. I thank God for that every time I take him in my arms, I believe."

"But it is wearing you out," he would answer. "O Jane! you are like a shadow now, and it seems as if you would slip away from me altogether some day. How can I bear to have it so?"

And Jane always answered brightly, "People don't 'slip away' before their work is done, David dear; and I feel as sure as if I had been told it, that nothing will happen to me while Aunt Bab and my baby are here to need me."

So the months went by, busily, anxiously, but not all unhappily, until the summer, too, was almost over, and the yellow leaves had begun to drop again from the great elm before the cottage. Jane told herself that her life was marked out for her now, and that no change would come to it again, for years at least. It was not a miserable prospect. She could see herself living out the quiet years in the cottage, with Aunt Bab growing more melancholy, perhaps feebler, as they passed, and the little one coming out of babyhood into the strong and happy boyhood

which she hoped to see. David would help her to bring him up. Perhaps the time might come when she and little Fred would be to each other what the mother and son next door were, in their beautiful home life; though that was a picture upon which Jane must not dwell too long. It was better not to look forward in this world. The present had blessings and enjoyments from day to day, if one watched for them; and one could trust for the future. Certainly no one could look forward without thankfulness to a life likely to be spent near such a friend as the lovely old lady at Number 15, moving among her roses with hands that gathered sweetness for all who came near her — to say nothing of Miss Wyman, and of that deeper, closer friendship than either of these; the “golden secret” which, as she had told David long ago, “would never let her be all unhappy again.” Yes, it would be a quiet, peaceful life — and peace was better than joy. Rest was the sweetest thing in the world; Jane sang of it softly as she rocked Fred to sleep: “Oh, rest in the Lord.”

She was sitting so one warm, still afternoon, when the light seemed sleeping 'over the tops of

the trees, and the breath of mignonette from the tiny flower-bed filled the room with sweetness. Aunt Bab had gone with Miss Wyman for a drive, and the baby was lying as usual, serene and happy, watching the sunshine and smiling occasionally, his still, gentle smile. The place was very quiet; even Teddy was away somewhere with Mrs. North, and a picnic had swept off the train of lads and lasses who usually haunted the Square. How long it was since an afternoon like this had come to Jane Dunbar! All her work was finished; it was of no use to begin anything new until the morning. She folded her hands and leaned back in her chair with closed eyes to enjoy the restful quiet. Such a time of peace and stillness was a gift to bring gratitude with it.

CHAPTER XXII.

AN OPPORTUNITY.

SOME one paused in front of the door, and she looked up with a little start. It was the new minister of the church — a young and warm-hearted man who had taken a fancy to the quiet little dressmaker, and came often to sit with her a little and try vainly to “cheer up” the spirit of her aunt. He was a little flushed and excited this afternoon. Jane caught herself looking at him in surprise again and again as he talked in a confused way of the weather and the church missions and other preparatory subjects. What could Mr. Keith be going to say? It was evident that something was on his mind. “Thankful that he had found her alone?” “Full of sympathy for her in her cares?” What was coming? She sat up straight in astonishment as his meaning dawned upon her. “Mrs. Clifton,” he was saying — “you know her? That tall lady in mourning who has recently come here. She is very rich, it seems, and has been to

me lately to consult me about some charities which she wishes to undertake. I thought of you at once when she spoke of the Old Ladies' Home. My dear Miss Dunbar, such a chance does n't come once in a lifetime. She has put three hundred dollars into my hands to provide for any old lady without support, and no one is to know where the money comes from. It is the most beautiful Home that can be imagined for any one, and your aunt would be happier there than anywhere, I should think. You have seen it, have n't you? — that beautiful stone building on West Hill, with the garden at the side. There are twenty-five inmates, and only this one vacancy. I go there often, and have always been charmed. She would be cared for all her life — the very best of care. The matron is a woman whom it is a pleasure to know. I said to Mrs. Clifton, 'I know just the woman,' and when I left her I came directly here. It seems a special providence, with your burdens; this baby and — your limited means, and the necessity for constant care of your aunt. They will receive her at any time, and, as I said, no one need know how the arrangement is made. I did not even mention your name to Mrs. Clifton. May I tell her that it is settled?

You are to be congratulated, Miss Dunbar, and your aunt too."

Jane regarded the speaker with a startled face. She had turned a little pale while he talked, and her eyes had grown dark in their intensity of thought. It had been impossible to restrain the sudden throbbing of her heart at the swift vision which his words called up; her aunt sheltered and comfortable; more comfortable than Jane herself could hope to make her—and herself set free, at last from the constant struggle to make both ends meet in the household economy, and free also for the un hoped-for happiness which would set another heart than hers bounding in sudden praise to the "Father of Lights." She drew a quick, deep breath at thought of David's face when he should hear such news. The remembrance of his words of a year ago rushed back upon her, bringing a glow to her face which kindled an answering light in that of the young man beside her. Mr. Keith looked at her with the unexpected discovery that plain little Miss Dunbar could be really pretty on occasions. He wished that Mrs. Clifton could see her at that moment. But in the next, the swift illumination had faded. Jane clasped her

hands nervously and glanced at him with a sort of appeal as she answered, —

“Send Aunt Bab away? Let strangers take care of her? O Mr. Keith, I can’t do that.”

“But it would n’t be like a real separation,” he urged, with a keen pang of disappointment. He had been so full of delight over this chance to lighten the burden of life for the woman whom he had pitied so often. “Don’t you see, it would be in the same town, and in such a good home; and you could go to see her twice a week or perhaps even oftener, and she would have every comfort? Forgive me, but I can’t help knowing that it must be difficult for you to give her all you would like now. You have all the rest of her life to think of, you know, and such a chance will not be likely to come again. She may live many years, you know,” —

“But do you suppose I would want her *not* to live?” cried Jane with a little touch of indignation. “Why, Mr. Keith do you suppose I don’t *love* Aunt Bab? I’ve lived with her all my life, and she was my own father’s sister. And, besides, she would never be happy away from me. You don’t quite understand. She would always feel that I sent her away. She — she does n’t

know that she is any care to me, and I would n't have her know it for all the world. Aunt Bab always tried to do her best for us when we were little. Oh, I could n't let her go. She would grieve all the rest of her life. But it was just as kind of you to think of us, and you will thank the lady? If Aunt Bab's mind was n't growing weak, you know, it would be different, a little, though even then I should feel as if it was my place to take care of her always, but you know she could n't understand it."

The young man was silent. There was a look of chagrin on his face. He had not thought of such an answer.

"It would n't be quite fair, either," said Jane deprecatingly. "You know it was for some one without means of support, and you could n't say that of Aunt Bab, when I am here to take care of her. There must be others who need it more."

"But perhaps you may not always be able to care for her," said the minister. "It seems—excuse me—almost foolish to let the opportunity for providing for her slip by. If your health should fail, or she should outlive you"—

"Don't you think that's one of the things where

it's safe not to take thought for the morrow?" said Jane, with a bright, flitting smile that seemed somehow strangely akin to tears. "I have a little laid by for a rainy day, and—I am quite strong and well, and it doesn't seem unsafe to do what will make Aunt Bab comfortable now and trust God to take care of us by and by—as long as it is n't likely that I sha'n't be able to do for her always. It seems as if it was work that was given me to do. Oh, I am quite sure that it is best as it is. Only, you must n't think me ungrateful. Indeed, I know how kind you are, but it wouldn't be right to let Aunt Bab leave me."

"Perhaps you are right," said Mr. Keith, rising to go. "I honor you for your conscientiousness, at any rate, though I can't see it quite as you do. Well—I hope it is all for the best."

"I think it is," said Jane quietly. "And will you please not speak of it, Mr. Keith? I shouldn't quite like to have it come to Aunt Bab, as it might. Thank you so much for thinking of us."

Her face was bright and calm as he looked back from the gate; but a tear or two fell on the baby's cheek as she stooped over him the next minute.

"Did I do right, Freddy?" she whispered. "You

know that I could n't do anything else, don't you, my blossom?"

She caught the child up from his pillows on the floor and kissed him passionately, with a sudden sob.

"We'll never tell anybody about it, will we, Freddy?" she said, holding the little creature close in her arms. "It would just set people wondering what was best to do—but not David. David would n't have had me give up Aunt Bab—no, and neither would his mother."

Freddy cooed softly for answer, and laid his downy head on her shoulder in his pretty baby fashion. If he had any undefined, infantine wonder as to the cause of his aunt's tears, he kept it successfully to himself, and reached after the flitting sunbeams over the back of the rocking-chair, as if there were no such things as loneliness and weariness and heartache in the world.

"And so there are n't in his world," said Jane, smiling through her tears as the thought came to her. "And so there won't be when we get into the kingdom of heaven, where we shall all be like little children together. It would be a great idea, if I could n't wait and do my work without getting blue,

when I've got all that before me. Bless you, baby boy! It's a comfort just to feel you in my arms. I'm glad *you* have n't got to the tired part of living yet—and I'm glad that there'll always be something beautiful beyond for you to wait for, even when you get into the very middle of it."

The sound of wheels was heard as she spoke, and presently Aunt Bab appeared at the door, tall and somber as usual, though Jane knew by the lofty expression of her face that she had come home "happy." In fact, Aunt Bab had had a wonderful afternoon, and was beguiled into forgetfulness of old stories for at least an hour, while her niece "drew her out" on the subject of the river road, the farmhouse where Miss Wyman had bought her a glass of milk, and the mill village where they had stopped for a peep at the day-nursery just established there.

"Forty-nine babies, and all children of wrath, but as pretty a sight as ever I saw," said Aunt Bab. "Time has been when it would make me real solemn to see 'em and reflect that this world is a place of woe and misery, and nobody knows what they're coming to, but, somehow, seeing 'em there so kind o' lively, with their blocks and

their baby-jumpers, and those nice little girls amusing them, why, I could n't help being real pleased. The Lord 's helping them through this part of the world, anyhow, and they may get along pretty comfortable, after all. There 's no knowing."

Jane went over and kissed her aunt gently. It was pleasant to know that she was happy. How long it was since Aunt Bab had spoken so cheerfully!

"You had a real good time, did n't you, Auntie?" said her niece, parting her gray hair and settling the cap where the green ribbons stood rampantly erect in absurd contrast to the subdued solemnity of the face below it. Jane's heart was very tender toward Aunt Bab this afternoon.

"You and I belong together, don't we?" she said, with another light kiss on the wrinkled forehead, as she went back to her seat. Aunt Bab smiled in a pleased way.

"You 're a good girl and always was, Jane," she said benignantly. "Yes, we belong together, and I 've always done what I could for you, and I consider you do me credit. We 've lived together a long time, have n't we? Ever since before your mother died, when I came to visit her and your

father, after I had the typhoid, and she took care of me so long. Let's see, that was after brother Reuben died, and that was twenty-five years ago. You can't remember much when I was n't at your house, can you? You were a nice little girl when I came, though plain, quite plain, you know. I used to say to you, 'Handsome is that handsome does;' and once you cried when I said it, and your mother hugged you and said you were the sweetest child in the world, and had the very face she liked best, and called you a brown song-sparrow, and a mignonette, and I don't know what all, till you stopped crying and began to laugh. I told Madeline she was very unwise, and she said she was n't going to have you set thinking about your looks, and that every word she said was true, and you were the comfort of her life, and so on. Madeline had childish sort of ways, but she was a good girl. She thought a good deal of you, Jane. I'd like to see Madeline again."

"So would I," whispered Jane, with eyes full of tears. She could say no more, and Aunt Bab wandered on, without noticing that she had spoken.

"That farmhouse made me think about when I

was at home, and father and mother were alive. There 's a time to weep and a time to dance, and it 's all gone and pulled down for the railroad, long ago, and the money used up, too. There was a snow-berry bush side of the front door, just like this one, and clam-shells along the walk. And the yard was all green, and there was a big pine-tree that had a robin's nest in it. I used to watch the robins. I was real happy then."

"And you 're happy to-day, dear, are n't you ?" said Jane, patting her hand caressingly. "I 'm so glad you had such a good time !"

"Yes, I had a real good time," assented Aunt Bab thoughtfully. "And last week, when Mr. Keith came and read all those psalms to me and sang that hymn that I used to sing when I was a girl, I had a good time too. Fact is, Jane, I 've had a good *many* good times first and last. I 've always been serious, and kept my eyes open for sorrow and mourning ; but, come to think of it, I have n't had such a hard life. I 'd got out of the way of thinking about the old farm lately. I was real glad to have it brought up. I was a proper handsome child, Jane, if I do say it, and well behaved. Father and mother set store by me—

being the only girl — and Reuben and your father were always kind to me. Well, they 're all gone, and I 'm the only one left. 'The way of the ungodly shall perish ;' no, that is n't what I mean, for they were n't ungodly, any of them, as you know very well, Jane Dunbar ; and I should think you might understand what I mean when you see that I can't get the word I want."

"They were like the path of the just that shineth more and more to the perfect day, were n't they ?" said Jane gently. "It 's pleasant to think how many there are waiting for us over there, in the brightness, is n't it, Auntie dear ?"

Aunt Bab nodded gravely.

"It 's getting near tea-time," she said presently. "I don't feel just like stirring round after the ride, so you leave Freddy here and hand me my Bible. I 'm going to look up some of those verses my mother used to teach me Sabbath days. It 's going to be a red sunset, Jane. We 'll have a clear day to-morrow.

Evening red and morning gray
Sets the traveler on his way.

Only we ain't going traveling. I wish our milk was like that out to the farmhouse ; but I don't

complain. There ! The Ten Commandments was the first, I remember. I 'll just read 'em over while you get tea. Things look real natural when you 're used to saying them over, and all of a sudden take it into your head to read 'em instead. You need n't hurry, Jane. I ain't in haste for my tea, and I 'd just as soon hold the baby as not."

Certainly Aunt Bab was in a most placid state of mind this evening. Jane inwardly blessed Miss Wyman as she went into the kitchen and began to consider the expediency of a visit to the beach on the cars, if her aunt should be able, next week.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE GLORY OF THE LORD.

GETTING out does her a world of good," thought the head of the family. "Miss Wyman is a real godsend to Aunt Bab, and so is—Why, there she is this minute, dear Mrs. North!"

She dropped her loaf of bread on the table and ran to the door a moment to kiss her friend, clinging to her hand in her childlike, loving way as she led her into the parlor, and drew a chair to the window near Aunt Bab before going to finish her task. Mrs. North was looking fairer and more peaceful than ever as she laid aside her little shawl and took up her knitting, at Jane's invitation to stay for tea. Aunt Bab smiled graciously upon her, and remarked that the "family likeness" to the Dunbars was very strong that day.

"I was reading the Ten Commandments," explained Aunt Bab in a satisfied tone. "One does n't read the Ten Commandments too often, ever.

Shall I read aloud, Mrs. North, while you 're knitting? There 's plenty of light, and it 's a very interesting chapter."

Jane heard the solemn voice, reading on and on, while she moved about the kitchen, bringing out the blue dishes and opening a little jar of sweet-meats in honor of their guest. Once or twice she stepped to the door and smiled at sight of the two strangely contrasting figures, and the faces, one bright with a still, inner radiance, the other lined and crossed with wrinkles of worry and fretfulness, but calm now, as if from new peace caught from the one beside her. Aunt Bab had finished the Commandments and turned back to the story of the waters of Marah and the joyful after-coming to the sweet wells of Elim among the seventy palms. Mrs. North had asked for that probably. No one knew better than David's mother how the bitter waters can be sweetened by that tree of life whose leaves are "for the healing of the nations." Jane listened with a new sense of comfort, setting a little vase of flowers on the table and drawing up the window-shade to let in the tender, passing daylight. They were beginning the next chapter now. After Elim, the desert; the long, weary

march, with the pillar of cloud and fire passing on before, slowly, slowly, over barren heaths and sandy wastes, through all hostile countries and between the scarped cliffs of the wilderness of Sinai.

“For forty years!” whispered the listener in the kitchen, with a smile and a sigh. “Well, the pillar of cloud and fire went before them, and they came to the Holy Land at last. What’s that in the New Testament? They were in the way going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus went before them? The way can’t be so *very* hard, with him to lead. It was only to keep on following. I’ve always got through, so far, and now that I’ve settled down for always, I must n’t get to dreading the road just because it’s long. There’s sure to be all the happiness I need to carry me through.”

“‘At even, then,’” read Aunt Bab, as her niece came into the parlor to say that tea was ready; “‘At even, then ye shall know that the Lord hath brought you out from the land of Egypt,’” — how the crimson and gold were blended in the sunset sky beyond her — “‘and in the morning’ — yes, Jane, in one minute — ‘in the morning, then ye shall see the glory of the Lord.’”

She lifted her head and looked at Mrs. North, with a pleased smile.

“Why — ain’t that pretty!” said Aunt Bab simply. “I don’t remember of reading that before.”

Mrs. North smiled too, a radiant, sudden smile of delight. She took the Bible and looked at the words herself, while Jane came to her side and bent over her shoulder.

“I never noticed it either,” said Mrs. North, with shining eyes. “‘At even — and then in the morning’ — Why, Miss Dunbar, I shall be so thankful that I came in just when you were reading. One would never tire of thinking of that Jane, dear, it’s all true now just as it was then, is n’t it? At even ye shall know; and then in the morning, the glory. It makes one almost glad that it *is* evening with us, does n’t it, Miss Dunbar? I’m so glad you found it. I shall think about it a great deal.”

“And I found it just when it was evening outside too,” said Aunt Bab, with childish pleasure and importance. “Yes, it’s real pretty. It’s worth your while to read in the Bible. Most always there’s something. I’ve read the Bible a

great deal in my day. ‘In the morning ye shall see the glory of the Lord !’ That’s real pretty and comforting.”

“It’s ever and ever, for every day, too,” said Jane, with a happy little sigh, as she led the way to the other room. “I shall like to think about it, too, Auntie, and the manna and the helps all along the way. You’ve had a lovely day, have n’t you, dear, with this to finish it ?”

Yes, Aunt Bab had had a happy day, and she grew so conversational over the biscuits and jam, that neither Mrs. North nor Jane found it necessary to do more than fill in the short gaps in her sentences and drop an occasional word of sympathy for past griefs or enjoyments. Jane was almost glad of the chance to be quiet. It was hard to talk to-night, somehow, even to David’s mother. The day had been a turning-point in her life, and she could not easily put out of her mind the question whose decision might have made such a difference in her life. It would be pleasant to be alone after Aunt Bab and Freddy were asleep : alone to rest and put away the hovering, wistful thoughts which would haunt the background of her consciousness.

Mrs. North noticed a strange look in her face once or twice during the hour before she went away,— a far-off, thoughtful look, with something of exaltation in it. She understood it afterwards, and knew why the flitting, tremulous smile came and went so often when Aunt Bab's talk rambled back to the verse about the evening and the morning.

“Does she need help to-night particularly, I wonder, dear little Jane?” thought her friend now. “If she does, that verse is a bit of manna dropped on purpose for her as well as me.”

She kissed the little dressmaker good-night with more tenderness than usual, a few minutes later, looking down at her with loving eyes as they stood together at the gate.

“Good-night, dear,” she said; and then with a swift impulse of affection, she put her arm about her companion for an instant, laying her delicate, faded cheek against the soft brown hair.

“God bless you, Jane!” she whispered. “He *will* bless you and give you all the help you need — my daughter.”

She was gone in another moment, looking back with her tender smile at the face in the doorway,

that flushed and paled with surprise and pleasure at the unexpected word. It was the first time that Mrs. North had spoken in that way. Jane had often wondered if she guessed how matters stood between herself and David. The tears sprang to her eyes with the sweetness of this sign of love and sympathy. Yes, "the help that she needed" would come—was coming already. Evening by evening and morning by morning, the manna would fall from His presence, and the wilderness and the solitary place would be glad for Him. She went back to Aunt Bab and Freddy, with the far-off, quiet look grown deeper in her eyes, and with a manner even more gentle and loving than usual toward them both.

Early the next morning Jane slipped quietly away from her aunt's side and stole to the window overlooking the street. She knelt down behind the curtain and looked out into the fresh beauty of the summer morning. There was dew glittering all over the grass, and the leaves of the elm were shining under the golden slanting rays of the young sunlight. Overhead were filmy wreaths of cloud, like trailing robes of the night-angels, passing upward to rest, now that their work was over.

A wren was singing his heart away somewhere among the greenness, and the fragrance of flowers was in the air. “The glory of the Lord” shone over all the happy earth at this sunrise hour. Jane’s face grew sweeter and more earnest as she bent forward, listening. Yes, there it was — the sound of an opening door, a cheery call, a blithe whistle, and the footsteps of the man she loved, coming out of his gate below. He did not see the watcher behind the curtain, though he glanced up in passing. If he had seen her, how should he have understood the long, tender, wistful look that followed him down the street? David could not know that the heart that loved him best was saying farewell at last to the half-defined hope which had been almost unconscious until the day before ; that the woman who might have been his wife was praying with tender tears, in the early sunshine, “Give him happiness and help and comfort! make his life bright, though the brightness can not come from me — and, as for me, give me strength and hope and patience to go my way alone.”

“Sweet—sweet—sweet” — sang the wren among the swaying elm-boughs. How cool and joyous the wind seemed! The little fountain had

caught a gleam of gold and sent it lightly upward, like a flashing, heavenly thought.

“Good-by, David dear,” whispered Jane softly, as she rose from her knees.

The room was very still. Freddy lay in his crib, his fair baby cheek flushed slightly with slumber, and his soft hair damp on his forehead. His aunt dropped a light kiss on the clustering amber rings.

“I must wake Aunt Bab quietly,” she thought. “It is n’t often that Freddy sleeps so soundly.”

Aunt Bab was sleeping very soundly herself. Her face was turned away from the light, and one hand lay motionless outside the white coverlet. It was a pity to disturb such deep repose. “I can’t even hear her breathing,” said her niece, bending over her. “I ’ll just let her sleep. Poor Aunt Bab, she needs the rest.”

“Let her sleep?” Ah, what sleep is this? What solemn brightness is on that worn, sorrowful face? Is this Aunt Bab, with the smile of a little child, and that “white peace” brooding over brow and cheek and dead, quiet eyes?

Freddy woke, startled at the cry that filled the room, but Jane had forgotten him. She was bend-

ing closer to the still sleeper, and crying with sudden, rushing tears, “O Aunt Bab! Aunt Bab! — the glory of the Lord!”

That evening, in the quiet parlor, where the shadows of the summer twilight lay in tender, deepening gray, Jane sat, with her hands in her lap, solitary and silent. Mrs. North had taken Freddy away to leave her to rest. There were footsteps moving softly up-stairs, and subdued voices of kindly neighbors, who had come in to “care for the house.” Jane was glad to be alone at last. There were traces of tears on her cheeks, but the look in her quiet eyes was of peace rather than sorrow. How could one mourn for her who had found the lost gladness of old days in the new morning of glory? Poor Aunt Bab! dear Aunt Bab! Jane would miss her — the last of her own people, except the clinging, helpless child, who must be her charge alone, now; but how could she help rejoicing for the happy soul who had fallen asleep on earth to wake in the sunshine land? And oh, how could she ever cease to give thanks that no thought of change had come to mar the quietness of that last peaceful evening!

Some one came softly into the room and stood

for a moment in the shadows before she noticed his presence. It was his voice that first told her that David was beside her.

“Jane! my little Jane!”

And Jane turned, like a tired child, to the arms that were to be rest and shelter and comfort for her as long as life should last. The loneliness and toil and weariness were over at last, and the hand of the Lord had led her home.

Later, when David had gone, and she sat alone again in the circle of lamplight about the table, she put out her hand and took up the little Bible which had lain so long among her work. Something slipped from it as she turned to the Fourteenth Chapter of St. John—a withered rose. Jane lifted it to her lips softly, before laying it back. How often it had brought her comfort, and how its vanished fragrance had mingled with the holy words where it had lain:—

“Let not your heart be troubled—I will not leave you comfortless.”

She read them over now with quiet tears; and then, turning the pages, laid her treasure tenderly at another place. The verse that it touched rang in her ears that night like a soft echo from the

blessed country, where those whom she loved were singing in fuller sweetness the song which she herself had learned in long sadness, as well as new springing joy.

“ Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name.”



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